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# CURES

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JAMES J. WALSH



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# CURES

## *The Story of the Cures That Fail*

BY

JOSEPH  
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*"I can speak of the disturbances of nature and her cures" . . .  
"And the cure is to remove these thoughts from you."*

*Shakespeare, Pericles and Henry VIII.*

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TO  
DR. GEORGE DAVID STEWART  
PRESIDENT OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE  
AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF APPRECIATIVE FRIENDSHIP





## PREFACE

The word cure meant originally only care. It has come to mean a method or course of remedial treatment successful in restoring a sick person to health. The physician undertakes to cure people in the original sense of the word, but there are any number of healers who promise "cure" in the second sense. Of these "cures" we have had an immense number and all but a very few of them have failed. After a time it has always been found in spite of their reputation that they did not cure, as was claimed, though often for a time it seemed to be perfectly certain that they worked a marvelous restoration to health not infrequently in cases where physicians had been unable to benefit the patients.

It is the story of these cures that have failed that is told in this book. That story should have a certain opportuneness of interest now that M. Coué has been with us and has attracted more attention than any other foreigner who visited America since the war, perhaps even more than Marshal Foch himself. The druggist of Nancy does not pretend to cure any one but shows them how to cure themselves. He just has people say "Every day in every way I am getting better and better." Strange as it may seem, these very simple words which contain nothing magical nor mystical, prove very efficient in his experience. It is said that sixty per cent of the thousands who go to see him every year are cured, thirty per cent are benefited and only

ten per cent are not favorably affected by his method of auto-suggestion, as he calls it, or self cure.

That bit of current history should of itself make it clear why we have so many "cures" that have failed. The human mind has a profound influence on the body. It can, through solicitude, produce such a disturbance of bodily function as to simulate even organic disease. That generic word dis-ease, as its etymology shows, means only discomfort. When there is something definitely physical the matter with the body, anxious solicitude may add to the symptoms and may make it impossible for the natural forces of recuperation, the resistive vitality, to act in such a way as to bring about restoration to health.

Under either of these circumstances representing a very large proportion of the ills of mankind, the familiar "complaints" of men and women, the main symptoms are due to the state of mind. Some strong mental influence which relieves the anxiety and puts an end to the solicitude will cure the disease. Unless there is a change in the mental attitude no "cure" will take place. No wonder then that a great many remedies and modes of treatment announced as surely curative have produced in the past and are still producing such a favorable effect upon the minds of patients as to relieve their symptoms and permit them to get better.

Neither the material nor the mode of the cure makes any difference, provided the mind of the patient is properly affected; indeed the remedy itself may do harm to some slight degree provided only the mental attitude is affected favorably. So all down the centuries we have had all sorts of means for the cure of disease. They have come and gone. Nearly every substance on the

earth or from under the earth or the heavens above has been used as a vaunted cure and has succeeded in a certain number of cases. Nearly every kind of persuasion, psychological, metaphysical, religious, superstitious, scientific and above all pseudo-scientific has been used efficaciously in the same way.

This is the material out of which this book on *The Cures That Have Failed* has been made. Poor human nature when ailing, like the drowning man, grasps at a straw, only the amusing thing is that his mind so often turns the straw into a solid beam of hope on which he floats into the harbor of good health when he thought that he was seriously ill. Why should not human nature have its delusions when they add to the happiness of men? It is not with the idea of eradicating the delusions that this book is written, but so that we may all together laugh a little quietly at this human nature of ours and its humorous ways.



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# CURES

## CHAPTER I

### THE CURES THAT FAIL

I THINK, without doubt, that the most amusing chapter in the history of human experience is the story of the "cures" that have failed. Every generation that we know anything about has had a lot of cures for diseases; some of the cures have been guaranteed to cure a whole series of diseases, and yet after a time they have proved utterly useless. Over and over again these cures have apparently worked wonders of healing and have cured many hundreds and at times even many thousands of people, some of whom at least had been sufferers for years. Yet after a while further experience and more careful observation have shown these precious "cures" to have absolutely no efficacy in the treatment of disease. Indeed, not a few of them have proved very definitely, when the facts were all summed up, to be distinctly harmful rather than beneficial to mankind, and yet there is no doubt at all that in the heyday of their early popularity they accomplished results so wonderful as to tempt even the most conservative of thinkers to feel that at last here was a real panacea for human ills.

It is a commonplace in the history of medicine to find that a number of people who had been complaining

of pains and aches and disabilities of one kind or another, the lame and the halt and sometimes actually the blind and the paralyzed, have learned of some new cure and having taken it have gone on their way rejoicing. They were well and they hastened to tell the world so. But after a while you hear no more of this cure. It worked a series of what seemed almost miracles of healing and then was lost to sight. It seemed a blessing for poor suffering humanity, it proved to be only another of the fond delusions of the history of healing. The cures of any generation, a great French physician declared, are absurd to the next generation. We wonder how anybody could be cured by them, but they were. Imagine knowing a man who for years walked lame with much pain, then seeing him walk straight, a well man. Of course, you would think that some marvel of healing had been worked. It had: but after a little while the remedy failed to cure others and it became clear that the cure had been effected through the patient's mind, not his body.

It is not surprising that men should take up with absolutely ridiculous cures of all kinds, for most of us have not too much reasoning power anyhow, and when we have anything the matter with us most of whatever little we have is likely to vanish. A drowning man will grasp at a straw, but a sick man will grab at the veriest will-o'-the-wisp. When a poor sufferer is told that here is some wonderful new remedy or mode of treatment that has cured others and that he ought to try, especially if he is told by some one who says it has cured him, it would be more than could possibly be expected of human nature if he did not try it. There are ever so many people going around who are quite sure that

no one understands their cases and that no remedy yet found is quite adequate to treat them. It is just possible that the physicians whom they have consulted may have found it difficult to discover anything serious the matter with them. As such persons have usually been able to get around and make their complaints heard there might be a presumption under the circumstances that there was not much the matter with them but of course every ailing person knows that this cannot possibly be true, so far as his individual case is concerned, and most of them are quite certain that what is needed for their peculiar ailment is some new discovery that has not cured mankind up to this time, but seems to have been unearthed opportunely to fit their condition by a special dispensation of Providence, as it were.

As a rule, each of these "cures" that have subsequently failed has cured many patients who enthusiastically came forward to proclaim the wonder-working power of the new mode of treatment. Not infrequently the ailments which were announced as benefited were of long standing and supposed at least to be quite serious in character. In spite of apparently the most incontrovertible evidence for the marvelous power of these "cures" when they were first introduced, there was the same striking succession of events with regard to each of them. It was about this way. They were announced and but few were interested in them, then they began to gain in vogue; after a while everybody got to know about them and many were enthusiastic over them, then they dwindled in interest and after a few years went their way quite as the snows of yesteryear, leaving no trace except the memory of another disillusionment for mankind and another chapter in the history of the cures that have failed.

Of course, according to all proper laws of action and reaction, and in accordance with the accepted principles of compensation, when the inevitable conclusion came that the "cure" was no good, every one who had been *cured* ought immediately to have relapsed into the disease from which he had been cured, but I need scarcely say he did not. Many of them went round flagrantly enjoying the good health which had been given them by this remedy, that now was known to be utterly inefficacious.

One reason why a great many of the *cured* patients did not relapse into their ailment was that in the interval before the discovery of the lack of value of their cure they had died. Some of them, indeed, had died as a result of the disease from which they had reported themselves cured. There have been not a few instances where people wrote testimonials as to their cure that were used for years after their death from the disease of which they had been "cured." Even the people who were alive, however, quite, as a rule, refused to be logical enough in conduct to revert to the diseases from which they had been cured, just because it had been found subsequent to their cure that they had no business being well, since the remedy which had supposedly cured them was proved to be utterly incapable of producing any such effect. And, after all, who would blame them! They just felt supremely grateful that they had been cured by it before the unfortunate discovery was made that it could not possibly cure. Most of them were very sorry for the others who, suffering from the same affection as themselves, could not be cured by the same means that had cured them because in the meantime it had been inopportunately discovered that the remedy or mode of

treatment had no power to make any such cures as had been originally announced for it.

The condition of affairs as we see it over and over again in the history of medicine is very well illustrated by a story that is told of an old French physician to whom a younger professional colleague, who had been a student of his, applied for advice with regard to tuberculosis of the lungs, from which he had been suffering for some time. The young physician wanted to know whether his old preceptor thought that it would be worth his while to take one of the new remedies for pulmonary tuberculosis which was just then attracting a great deal of attention. The old man who was noted for his tolerant sympathy for mankind and its foibles replied at once, "Oh yes, take it by all means, and take it now while it cures, for after a while it will be found that it does not cure and then of course it will do you no good, and you will have missed your chance." Any one who knows even a few of the many much-vaunted remedies for consumption which have been introduced from year to year and have been loudly praised not only by their inventors but by a great many "cured" patients and yet after a while have disappeared so completely that nothing is ever heard of them again, will appreciate very well how the old man felt with regard to this new and promising remedy.

The accumulation of disappointments for mankind by which much bepraised remedy after remedy and ingenious mode of treatment after mode of treatment have gone into the lumber room of disused "cures" and into the discard of innocuous desuetude has not made a single bit of difference with regard to the success of each subsequent crop of new remedies destined to fail in their



turn. Every year brings another harvest of them and mankind is always ready to take the latest and be benefited by it until sufficient knowledge of it is secured to show that it not only does no good but could not possibly do any good. The wheel of time, assisted, of course, by ingenious mortals intent on making money or gaining prestige, goes right on turning out remedies and modes of treatment and therapeutic inventions of various kinds which promise much and serve to occupy the minds of patients, even if they do no more good than that. Nearly every year sees some new and supposedly very important remedy for some very serious disease, the subject of announcements. Consumption is the favorite object of these attentions because it is slow-running, as a rule, and affords opportunity for a prolonged treatment, but most of the ills to which flesh is heir have had new cures provided for them over and over again until it would seem as though it must be only the foolish neglect of mankind to take the remedies so bountifully provided by nature—and art—that permits any of mankind to be seriously ailing any more.

It is surprising to go over a list of the things that have cured people and the modes of treatment that have been announced as cures of the most efficacious kind. Stroking people gently and thus presumably putting some of the vitality of the stroker into the ailing has come back over and over again as a wonderful curative remedy. Giving them curious things by mouth, such as the moss scraped from the skull of a culprit hanged in chains, or mummy from the Egyptian tombs, or the roots of plants plucked in a graveyard in the dark of the moon, all these have not only worked occasional cures but have continued in active use even by physi-



cians for several centuries as productive of wonderful results of healing. Magnets have cured people, and of course little toy electrical machines that we would laugh at; and then, pretended batteries said to contain electricity, but not producing an ion of electricity anywhere, have proved marvelously efficacious. The supposed magnetic quality of certain human beings richly endowed in this regard has been passed over to others who needed such stimulation and in this way animal magnetism for several generations proved to be almost a miracle worker of healing. Ground dried vermin have cured what were thought the most serious internal diseases, and the touch of a hangman's rope, the worst of external affections. Cheap whisky properly diluted and flavored with druglike substances has given people new life who had been suffering for years and who were supposed to be doomed to suffer for all the rest of their earthly existence. Only of course it was not labeled whisky, but tonic bitters or neurilla, or nervina or herb tonic or mother's medicine or some other suggestive title.

It might possibly be thought that such cures could be worked successfully in the older time and in the European countries when there was very little of popular education and when, unfortunately, people were superstitiously ready to believe almost anything and to accept any declarations that were made to them, but that here in America, especially since the diffusion of popular education has come about, there was an end of this amusing chapter in the history of humanity. What we find, however, is exactly the opposite. It is here in America particularly that we have had the greatest cure delusions. It is here on this side of the water, especially with the spread of popular education, that all sorts of healers

and modes of healing have found the readiest followers. Americans are more enterprising and, as a result, we have had ever so many more successful discoverers of new remedies which have cured for a while and then failed, than any other country. In the meantime the inventor or the discoverer has made his fortune out of the new cure that he launched, then with canny American practicableness has kept the fortune that he made out of it and transmitted it to his descendants. Not a few of our best families owe the foundation of their prosperity to the fact that there was a remedy compounder in the family tree a generation or two ago.

Some examples are particularly interesting. Just about the time that Galvani discovered that a frog's legs would twitch when the nerves were touched by certain metals, a Yale graduate, Dr. Elisha Perkins, invented his metallic tractors and proceeded to cure nearly all the chronic diseases with them. He created a great sensation not only here but across the water. His tractors may still be seen in our American museums. Almost needless to say there is nothing in them, they are just inert pieces of metal, but hundreds of thousands of cures were made by them; the enthusiastic son of the inventor thinks that the cures were up in the millions.

Shortly before the middle of the nineteenth century, animal magnetism enjoyed a great vogue with us. We had magnetizers of all kinds. Probably most of them were quite convinced that they were possessed of some wonderful power which they could transfer to the body of others and cure them of all manner of diseases. It would be surprising if they did not believe it, for did not patients suffering from all sorts of diseases come to them and after being treated for a time proclaim them-

selves cured? Were not their patients ready to pay them handsomely for the benefits conferred upon them by the magnetizers? Surely they must know that they had been benefited and that having been ill they were now well, and so the magnetizers went on with their good work, blessing the Providence that had conferred such beneficent powers on them and thanking their stars that they had discovered this power to do good. Wherever they went they became the center of admiring throngs who were quite sure that they were possessed of simply marvelous curative energies which they could pass on to unfortunate sufferers for their relief from pain and discomfort and their restoration to health.

In the second half of the nineteenth century we had the blue glass craze. Many thousands of people sat under blue glass for some hours each day and as a result, pains and aches that had bothered them for years and even disabilities which had lamed them or made them quite incapable of using certain of their muscles, dropped from them as if by magic and they proceeded to get better. Not a few of them renewed their health and strength so that they seemed almost to become young again. After a while the fad for sitting under blue glass passed. Now no one thinks for a moment that ordinary blue light applied in this way will do any possible good, no more than any one who knows anything about it, or has any right to have an opinion, will admit that there is any such thing as animal or human magnetism which passes from one person to another with curative effect.

These are only striking examples of the "cures" of the nineteenth century here in America. There are any number more of them. It might possibly be thought

that at least in the twentieth century here in America there would be no such occurrences. Immediately preceding generations may still have had some of the old-time foolishness of the race and the credulousness of humanity left in them, but we of this generation in the twentieth century who are "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time" would not fall for anything like that. As a matter of fact there are more cures that fail after a time in our generation than ever before. Just as the twentieth century opened, Alexander Dowie was "touching" people and producing wonderfully curative effects. He thought that he had cured at least two hundred thousand people of ills which their physicians had been unable to relieve. He announced that he was Elijah returned to earth and the acceptance of that idea was quite enough to lead a whole lot of people, many of whom had made a deal of money, to believe in his power to heal, and from belief to healing the step is so short that their ills just seemed to drop from them when he touched them, and they were quite willing to place in his hands all the money they had in the world because of the amount of good they felt that he had done for them.

These are only characteristic examples of the story of cures of various kinds which afterwards failed that are discussed in this book. It is time for us to realize how such cures are made. Above all it is time for us to appreciate that humanity is so constituted that something more than half the ills of mankind are of such a nature that they will not be cured until some very impressive motive, either from religion or from science, real or supposed in both cases, is brought to bear on the minds of patients to change their mental attitude

toward themselves and then their ills drop from them as if by miracle. These cures that have failed have never cured the serious organic diseases of mankind; cancer, Bright's disease, heart disease and the contagious diseases generally have not come under the healing influence of these passing fads of medicine. At times the cures have proved efficacious in relieving certain concomitant symptoms and making even the patients who were sufferers from organic disease feel ever so much better for a time, but their underlying affections have continued to progress and have eventually brought about the death of the individual. These represent the instances where in spite of testimonials of cure the patients died not long after and unkind newspapers could sometimes exhibit pictures of the testimonial of the cure and the tombstone of the individual on the same page. This was a *deadly* parallel that could scarcely help to raise a laugh, and yet it is not a surprising coincidence. Any number of such parallels might have been made.

The story of these cures that have failed is the only background that will enable us to understand the meaning of a great many healing movements that are current in our time. We are just as susceptible of being influenced by healers and healing methods, absurd in themselves, as any generation of mankind ever was. Indeed, the increase of the avenues of publicity and the fact that our newspapers and magazines are constantly reporting the progress of new curative methods, make our generation readier victims, or if you prefer the term, easier subjects for "cure" than people were in preceding generations. Unless we can stand off and laugh at ourselves for our foolish credulousness

while laughing at the past, we shall continue to furnish ever so many more examples of "cure" by means that have no physical efficacy in themselves and provide just so much more material for new chapters in the history of the cures that fail.



## CHAPTER II

### PERSONAL HEALERS

ALL down the centuries men have bobbed up serenely and have announced that they were possessed of healing powers. If there was anything the matter with you, it mattered not what, from cancer to warts, or catarrh to consumption, all you had to do was to come and be "touched" by them and you would get better. They always "touched" you all right and extracted a certain amount of precious metal or its equivalent during the process. Of course, if your ill was a chronic one you must expect to have to be "touched" a few times, but cure was only a question of a little patience and continued surrender of the precious metal. It was metallotherapy nearly always as well as the healing touch. If you doubted, there were lots of people around to assure you that they had been thoroughly healed. The healer himself fairly radiated healing power; how could you help but get better if you submitted to his ministrations?

When we read the accounts of the wonderful success of such healers in the Middle Ages—and of course there were lots of them, with immense numbers of devoted followers, the healed who had felt in their own persons the master's power—we are not surprised because we think that in those benighted times people were superstitious and credulous and did not know what was the matter with them anyhow. But healers of all

kinds have proved just as effective in recent centuries, and even in our own generation, as at any time in the world's history. Indeed it looks as though a great many people, who seem in most of the ordinary relations of life to have some sense, are lying in wait for the chance to be "cured" by one of these healers with a mission. There is not the slightest reason for thinking that any of these healers was possessed of any genuine physical power to heal, but they "cured" people and often in such numbers that they attracted widespread attention, acquired a great reputation and were much sought after. And this is just as true in our enlightened age as it was at any time, and successful healers have been quite the order of the day during the twentieth century.

Passing over the story of the older times with regard to which we often lack the details that would demonstrate the real nature of the cures, it is very interesting to trace the careers of healers, at least a few of the greatest of them, since the time when Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood became the scientific foundation for clinical medicine at the beginning of the seventeenth century when the modern era of medical science began. It might be thought that that great advance in medicine which soon came to be popularly known and appreciated would put an end to the ready credulity of the older time, particularly among the educated classes, but of course it did not. There were just as many followers after healers as ever. Indeed, it might seem that there were more and that the new interest in medicine made people readier victims of the old-fashioned healing delusions.

The most famous of the healers in our English-

speaking countries—and he is a type of the healer of all times—was Valentine Greatrakes, who came in the very next generation after Harvey. He was born in Ireland, of English descent, and his name has been forever inscribed in the history of his time. He announced when he was just past forty years of age that “an impulse or strong persuasion came over him” to touch people for the “King’s evil.” This was the common name for scrofula, that is, tuberculosis of the glands of the neck. Practically, however, any form of disease in which people persistently lost weight had come to be called scrofulous, so that a whole series of vague affections, for which no special reason could be found, came under the term.

Ever since Edward the Confessor’s time the Kings of England, through power said to be inherited from him, had cured the “King’s evil”—hence its name—by their touch. The healing power had been exerted successfully by kings of the most disreputable character, those who had put to death their near relatives to secure possession of the throne, who had plunged England into civil war for their own selfish aggrandizement, men who stopped at nothing if only they could secure some personal advantage or even some passing pleasure. After changes of reigning families, the success of the new king’s touch in curing was claimed to be a demonstration of approval from on High of the rights of the new monarch to the throne. Very often both the king and the pretender were getting curative results at the same time. The king’s touch was only another example added to many others of the influence of mind over body when men become impressed. When Cromwell assumed the kingly power,

but not the throne, he refused to have anything to do with this touching for disease. A great many people felt that this was unfortunate and so when Greatrakes made the announcement that he had been divinely commissioned by the Holy Ghost to touch sufferers a great number of people crowded to him to be touched, and most of them were cured. All sorts of conditions of discouragement, dreads of various kinds, and solitudes that were making people thin and keeping them from eating, properly vanished at Greatrakes' touch. No wonder that he was encouraged in his mission. It is not surprising that another "impulse" came to him, telling him that he could cure "the ague" and not long after "God was pleased by the same, or the like impulse, to discover unto me that He had given me the gift of healing." Greatrakes dreamed this three times on successive nights and every one in Ireland, particularly, knows that whenever you dream a thing three times in succession, above all in sequence, it is surely so, and as a result there was great faith in Greatrakes. The ailing flocked around him in such numbers that from six in the morning until six in the evening he saw and "touched" people and cured them. The Anglican bishop of the diocese forbade him to proceed with the work, but Greatrakes, though a professed Anglican himself, indeed an Anglican Archbishop of Dublin was a near relative, answered that he could not obey a command to cease from works of charity. He continued to exercise his beneficent mission and became the best known man of his day in Ireland.

All he did to effect a cure was to stroke with his hand the part affected, hence his name in history of Greatrakes (there are such variants of the spelling as

Graterakes and Greatreakes) the Stroker. He cured, above all, pains and aches and disabilities of all kinds. The stroking, according to the healed patients, caused the pain gradually to migrate from the diseased part toward the extremities, the fingers or toes, but sometimes in the direction of the nose or the ears or the tongue and so on out of the body. They could feel it going, *going*, and then the next thing it was *gone* for good. It would remind one of some of Coué's healing in our own year of grace, 1923.

Greatrakes was brought to England by Lord Orrery, who was confident that he would work wonders of healing on the English as he had done on the Irish. Sure enough he did and Greatrakes created a sensation in Britain. He "cured" not only the "King's evil," but, as a contemporary declared, "palsy, dropsy, epilepsy, ulcers, the stone, wounds and bruises, lameness, deafness, partial blindness, 'phthisick' (the term of the time for consumption), besides innumerable cases of vaguely described pains and weakness." These cures were attested by a large number of grateful patients but also by many other credible witnesses, even doctors and divines as well as, of course, persons of quality. Some of those who were ready to bear witness to his healing power, as they had witnessed it themselves, were persons of high prestige in the intellectual world of the time. Robert Boyle, "the father of chemistry" as he is sometimes called, and deservedly, but whom the Irish recall as the brother of the Earl of Cork, Sir William Smith, Dean (afterwards Bishop) Rust, Richard Cudworth and Andrew Harvell, as well as many others of notable intelligence and education in the Restoration



period, were quite convinced that Greatrakes was doing a great mission of healing.

How did he do it? One of his disciples has told us, quoting the master: "The diseases which he cured he conceived to be caused by the possession of devils, who were driven out under his hands." Children's diseases particularly were for Greatrakes nothing more than instances of diabolic possession which were ended by his touch. This idea was the basis of his therapeutics and the assumed reason for his cures in practically all of the cases. He had the feeling that physical evil no more than moral evil did not come from God but from the devil and that he was divinely appointed to help people to rid themselves of any unfortunate connection there might be between them and the father of evil. He had absolute confidence in his mission. All he had to do was to get the devil out of them and then they would be well. The Holy Ghost had commissioned him, the rest was easy.

He communicated this confidence to others and then the "cures" took place. It is surprising how often down the centuries this idea, or one just like it, has proved effective in the cure of disease. Take the proposition once to heart: "Evil does not come from God but from the evil spirit or from ourselves in evil mood" and, as soon as this notion is sincerely accepted, all sorts of symptoms drop from people. Pfarrer Gassner in the eighteenth century anticipated Mrs. Eddy in this and cured his thousands. But practically all the religious healers, and their name is legion, have effected their "cures" this same way. Dowie and Schlatter in the twentieth century, whose story comes later, the Leatherstocking God in the mid-nineteenth cen-

ture, the Seer of Poughkeepsie and ever so many others at all times have "cured" people by getting them away from the spirit of evil. Greatrakes was only an early pioneer but by no means the earliest in this regard. This idea was the principal stock in trade of the Indian medicine men before Columbus discovered America, but also of the temple healers in old Egypt thousands of years ago. There is no idea that ailing humanity falls for so readily as this, once it becomes convinced of the mission of the healer.

Strangely enough, in spite of the development of modern science and the spread of popular education, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Alexander Dowie came forward as a healer here in the United States, and probably secured a greater numerical following than any healer before his time in a corresponding period. He claimed to be Elijah or Elias returned to earth. Elijah is one of the few human beings who, according to the scriptural story, did not suffer death but was transported to heaven on a chariot of fire. Dowie's modest claim was that as Elijah he had returned to heal mankind before the coming of the Savior himself to judge them, for it was to be a generation properly prepared for his second coming whom the Lord was to meet.

It was not long before Dowie had an immense following. He cured people by the hundred and then by the thousand of ailments of all kinds which had proved obdurate to the best medical treatment of the time. It was, above all, when physicians did not seem able to tell what was the matter with patients that Dowie cured them. He did not have to tell what was the matter, that would often have been a hopeless task.



He just cured them. That was ever so much better than being told what was the matter. He cured particularly the people who were suffering from pains and aches and from muscular disabilities of all kinds, from tremors and incapacities—the lame, the halt and the blind (for there is neurotic blindness in many degrees)—until to many he seemed to be veritably almost divine. These are always the cases that get cured and give healers prestige. In public lectures he claimed to have cured over 200,000 people by touching them. It was not merely the poor and the ignorant who were cured by him but many of those who were very comfortably endowed with the world's goods and some of whom had made a great deal of money in proportion to their neighbors so that presumably they would be smarter than the generality of people around them. Mark Twain once said that a capacity for making money is no guaranty of the possession of common sense. Dollars and sense do not necessarily go together. How sincere these people were in their reverence for the new prophet, or rather the old one come back, can be best appreciated from the fact that a great many of them entrusted Dowie with all the money they had and then went to live under his direction in Zion City, the new Jerusalem of the modern time, situated on the Lake front north of Chicago.

Perhaps there was no place where the people felt more the possibility of the devil having a hold on them. Maybe that was why Dowie selected the location of his New Jerusalem not far away on the principle that Dean Swift left his money to found a mad house in Dublin

“To prove by one satiric touch  
No nation needed it so much.”

Dowie's success only goes to show how little humanity changes down the ages in spite of all we hear of evolution and progress, and how there is something in human nature itself which makes all classes of people ready under certain circumstances to be cured by a healer of this kind. There is no incident of the Middle Ages, not even in that period usually supposed to be the darkest—the Tenth Century—that is any more redolent of what is sometimes called superstition or inability to appreciate realities than this of Dowie in the full light of the twentieth century.

Shortly after Dowie's death a rival of Dowie came into prominence for a time. His name was Schlatter and he announced that he, too, was a divine personage with special connections with heaven which gave him a wonderful power to heal. He climbed the mountain of the Holy Cross in Colorado and coming down unkempt, unshaven, and worn in body, declared that he had spent forty days in fasting up on the mountain and now was ready to heal mankind. The good people of Denver flocked to him in large numbers after he had demonstrated his power to heal chronic ills by curing a number of people who had made the rounds of physicians without success. The pains and the aches and the disabilities of mankind, these were the affections that he could particularly cure. As with Dowie, it was the lame and the halt and the blind who yielded to his heaven-sent ministrations. People who had not walked without a cane for twenty years and sometimes without a crutch for the same length of time, were able to discard these artificial helps and walk on for themselves. No wonder then that he attracted attention. The cures continued and people flocked to him in such large

numbers that they interfered with traffic outside of the house where he lived. The police had to take charge of the crowd and those waiting in line to see him were said at one time to be more than four blocks long.

A word from him was enough to "cure" people. He assured people that they were going to get well, and they proceeded to do so. As he passed in the street, women stooped to touch the hem of his garment and sometimes declared afterwards that that passing touch had been quite enough to bring about a cure of ills from which they had suffered in secret for a long while. Poor Schlatter got into trouble with the United States postal authorities. They have no ills to be cured. Schlatter could not reap his harvest fast enough from those who came to see him, so he began to send out "blessed" handkerchiefs by mail—used ones it is to be supposed as containing the emanations of the holy one, at so much *per*—guaranteeing that these would cure all the ills that flesh is heir to, and unimaginative Uncle Sam's post office declared this to be fraud. Schlatter's story is only one of many incidents of the same kind in history, but the fact that it occurred during the twentieth century—Schlatter's death was in the newspapers as this book went to press—in a large city of the west where people rightly rather prided themselves on their culture and where the schools are well organized and well attended, strongly emphasizes the fact that mankind has not changed a bit in its tendency to be "cured" by strong impressions of any kind produced on the mind, whether these come from religion or science or still more from pseudo-science or some perversion of religious faith. The one all-important thing is that those who expect to be cured shall be deeply impressed,

shall become assured that they are going to be better, and under that conviction proceed to lead more normal lives until they get entirely well.

**A Noble Earl Healer.**—A quietly amusing instance of personal healing is the story of the late Earl of Sandwich as told by himself in a little book written some ten years ago. In this the noble author describes a number of cases “cured” by his personal ministrations. He just touched patients and they got better. His first cure was that of an old servant of the Sandwich family suffering from a lame back which crippled him very sadly. He had been to many physicians and they had failed to do him any good. The Earl laid his hands on the affected part and the servant straightway proceeded to get better. This convinced the noble lord that he had a “gift” for the healing of disease. For it, he felt a most profound gratitude to Almighty God and felt also that he was bound in duty to make use of it. Of course it goes almost without saying that with such a belief in his healing mission he “cured” a great many people. He confesses quite frankly and candidly as becomes a healer with a divine mission, that in a few cases he failed, but this was because of lack of faith on the part of the patients, and not at all because of any limits to his healing power. On the other hand, he is quite sure that many patients who got better sometime, even many months after he had seen them, apparently without benefiting them, really owed their “cure” to his ministrations, though they did not recognize the source of the healing and often failed to be properly grateful.

He expresses profound regret that people around him generally refused to acknowledge this marvelous

gift of healing which he possessed, but the failure of recognition of his beneficent power and above all the opposition which it aroused he sets down as a manifestation of the inherent contradiction between good and evil in the world. He saw in it a confirmation of his divinely dispensed gift and evidently had the feeling that since his Master who went about healing the sick was persecuted, the least he could expect was persecution also. He tells naïvely how his friends refused to give credit to his gift and even after a time preferred, because of its manifestations, not to associate with him. "Old friends so disliked the idea that they began by shunning all allusions to the subject and now avoid my society." Instead of being discouraged by this, however, the noble Earl felt that such skeptics are to be classed among those who fail to believe properly in the Scriptures and above all who do not recognize the mission of healing that is in Christianity. He thinks that every Christian would have this same gift of healing he claims for himself if he only believed as he should in the inheritance of Christ's power. Faith will move mountains of disease now as of old.

It is evident even from the reading of his own story that the dear good Earl was one of those interesting persons who have a strong delusion of grandeur and belief in their own importance in the world and are sure that they were born to set things right in creation. Curiously enough, they are often able to make others around them accept their own estimate of themselves. Such folk often become a nuisance for those among their friends who are reasonably rational, because they cannot understand why everybody will not accept their ideas at their own personal valuation of them and



recognize the transcendent nature of their personalities. What is interesting for us, however, is that this simple-minded, but perfectly harmless paranoiac made a large number of cures and that his cures were very often of the chronic pains and aches and disabilities which physicians had failed to relieve, though in most of the cases many of them had been consulted. The Earl came along and "laid hands" on these people and in the power of his divine mission, which he himself so firmly believed in, cured the poor sufferers. His work is a type of the cures of this kind all down the ages. Poor people, and especially the Earl's own retainers, were very deeply impressed by the fact that he should stoop to be interested in them; his words of consolation and the touch of his hands altered their attitude of mind toward their long-standing ills and so they were cured. Every cure that he made strengthened his faith in his power and made it so much easier for him to cure others because the psychic contagion of such curative movements adds to suggestive power and is of itself one of the strongest factors in bringing about further cures. Most healers make use of some physical means or other, but absolutely nothing is required for curative purposes in a great many cases if only the patient's mind can be reached effectively and his feelings toward himself changed to favorable rather than unfavorable suggestion as to his disease.

**A Great Pioneer.**—Among the personal healers who worked wonders and attracted attention not only in his own city, but in distant towns and indeed all over New England, must be counted Phineas Quimby. He began his adventures in healing through hypnotism which in his time, about the middle of the nineteenth century,

was called animal magnetism and was attracting wide attention in England. Elliotson, who first invented the name hypnotism, was exposed very much as Dr. Luys was in Paris at the end of the century, but before the exposure took place this form of psychic healing had received a great new boom. After some experience Dr. Quimby found that he had no need of any extraneous aid, for he discovered that his own clairvoyant power equipped him to look deep into his patient's mind, or at least enabled him to induce the patient to tell him "all his sensations." He would sit beside the patients, look steadily into their eyes—he himself had what were called "magnetic eyes"—and then they would pour out all their thoughts to him and he would proceed to "cure" them.

The principal feature of his "cure" consisted in directing the thoughts of his patients to some other part of the body from that supposed to be affected. Patients have told the story of some very wonderful results in this regard. For instance, a patient suffering severely from a boil on the neck was directed to think of one of her teeth, which was slightly sensitive, and then after a time she had quite a toothache, but the pain from the boil on the back of her neck had disappeared. This would be an illustration of Hippocrates' old aphorism that "one pain drives out another," just as one nail drives out another. When patients had pains in their toes, Quimby transferred them to their fingers, and then by rubbing these, cured the patients. Headache, for instance, was transferred so as to become an ache in the shoulder, and then slight rubbing of this and the imparting of some of his own



superabundant magneto-electric vitality to the patient, brought "cure" with it.

Any such method as that of curing painful conditions would seem to be entirely too simple to be effective. The surprise is the number of patients who were cured by him after they had been to see many physicians without avail. Mrs. Eddy, afterwards the founder of Christian Science, for instance, having had a fall, was suffering from what was said to be "spinal nervousness." What a lovely vague ailment! What a multitude of neurotic tendencies the term might cover! Mere physicians could not cure her. She got no relief until she went to Quimby. The very first day he treated her she was ever so much better, and in three days she was cured. She was poor, travel was expensive, she traveled what was a considerable distance for New Englanders in those days to get to Quimby in Portland, Maine, and then lived near him so as to be under his care, and her faith was rewarded by cure. She extolled his "wisdom" and felt that he was the only one that really understood her case. "The misunderstood woman," how frequent she has been all down the ages needing some one with special inspiration to solve the riddle of her ailment! Mrs. Eddy returned to Quimby a number of times to have her cure confirmed and gradually elaborated her own method of healing.

The twentieth century has had more than its share of these personal healers. All during the nineteenth century they were to be found active and with a following, depending entirely on the number of people that they could get to. If they were in country places they had only a few, though even there suffering people often came from long distances to see them. In the

cities their patients crowded to them, usually occupying their whole day from early morn until late at night quite as they did for Greatrakes. Indeed, the nineteenth-century healers are so important that it has been impossible to tell their story as a part of a chapter like this, and so a special chapter on Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of Poughkeepsie, and a few others has been written. Even that cannot include anything like the numbers who claimed the power to heal and demonstrated their possession of the power by the number of cures that they worked. By their "cures" ye shall know them.

Uncle Henry, writing in *Collier's* not long since, reminded us of the number of men who used to go around to the little country towns curing dozens and scores of people everywhere and producing a great sensation in little town life. Most of them, of course, gave some sort of rather nasty medicine usually with a rather definite action on the bowels. Not a few of them, however, did nothing but apply their hands and it was marvelous how many people they cured. Uncle Henry has told the story of one of these wizard healers of the olden time:

"The doctor I remember best was Professor Hieronymus. He had sideburns longer'n my mother's lace curtains, an' could cure anything from birthmarks to baldness, no ailment barred. Vital healin', he called it. No knife, no medicine nor nothin', jus' the plain application of his hands over the afflicted part. Why, Barney, magnetism poured out of him like sap out of a sugar maple. For two dollars he'd take plain tissue paper between his palms an' vitalize it, an' all you had to do to keep well was jes' pin it on your night shirt at

the back over the great nerve center of the human body."

There were hundreds of men who, like Professor Hieronymus and Professor Grimes, the "magnetizer," who started Andrew Jackson Davis on a life of healing, went around the country at all times during the nineteenth century and made a nice easy living "curing" people. They came to hold a position of reverence and almost respect in the minds of people whose ills they relieved. What is interesting always is that they did relieve ills. Pains and aches disappeared before their ministrations, whatever they might claim them to be, like dew before the morning sun. They were usually glib talkers, very commonly they had a vocabulary of long, scientific words, and some conversational familiarity with recent discoveries in science. The healers just talked their complaints right out of people. Almost needless to say they did not cure cancer or any other of the organic diseases, but they did make great inroads of healing on that immense floating stratum of our population who are quite sure that they are suffering from some serious disease and who know that none of the ordinary remedies will cure them and that some great new discovery in therapeutics needs to be made to relieve their complaints.

All these patients are leaners—they must have some one to lean on; whenever they have anything the matter with them, they must be "cured" or they cannot be persuaded that they are well. Nature alone never cures them, there must be some system or mode of healing with a special appeal to their minds or some highly gifted individual who comes to their rescue, and then they proceed to get well. This was true in

the old Temple Hospitals in Egypt 5,000 years ago, in the health resorts of the Greeks, as at Epidaurus 2,500 years ago, among the Romans at the time of Christ when there was no regulation of the practice of medicine and the healers had their full fling, during the Middle Ages when people were supposed to be particularly credulous, but especially in our day when the healers multiply and the cures are more and more. When we recall the fact that Coué is just at the height of his fame as a personal healer of men, and F. Matthias Alexander from Australia specializes in curing university professors—particularly professors of history and psychology and philosophy—of their ills by his personal influence and his breathing exercises, is there any hope that mankind will ever be any different from this?

## CHAPTER III

### DRUG CURES

**T**HE word "drug" means something that is dried to be kept for future use. The term came to be limited to the dried herbs—plants of various kinds, that were gathered for the cure of disease. After a time its meaning was extended to include minerals and animal products that were thought to have a curative effect, corresponding to that of the dried plants. The development of the significance of the word did not end here. Probably the most interesting reflection for us in this volume on the word "drug" is to be found in the use of it to indicate something that has lost its value and is no longer salable. We say that things are "a drug on the market" when nobody wants to buy them. Evidently this usage came from the fact that so many materials, which for a time had had a great vogue and abundant sale because they were thought to produce wonderful curative effects, failed after a time to do any good and thus became quite literally "drugs on the market." This is etymology's rather pessimistic bit of humor with regard to drugs and their rise and fall in popularity and vendibility.

Almost endless is the number of materials of various kinds that, announced as sure cures for all sorts of ills, have apparently proved their efficacy in a great many cases of even serious diseases, and then, after further experience and observation, have failed utterly to do

any good. Thousands of different materials that have been used confidently by physicians and even, I may venture to say, thousands that have found their way into official lists of drugs are now completely given up. Even out of the many hundreds of drugs in our present pharmacopœias, physicians use scarcely more than a couple of dozen as a rule, and the older and more experienced a physician is the fewer drugs he employs.

This is not a bit of therapeutic nihilism nor am I, in any sense of the word, an anti-drug fanatic. Far from it; there is a dozen of drugs that are simply invaluable. They are the most precious gifts of nature to man. There is a score more that on special occasions represent the best possible auxiliaries for a healthy reaction against disease. No serious-minded physician would want to be without these drugs for the world. The practice of medicine without them would indeed be a discouraging procedure. There are almost no "cures" among them, however. Physicians have given up the idea of cures. It is true that quinine is a very definite remedy for malaria, and mercury and arsenic for *lues*, but these act by killing the microbes of the diseases in our system. With them we have practically exhausted the list of specifics. Apart from these, however, we have a precious series of about a dozen of different materials that are helpful in the treatment of human diseases in very wonderful fashion. These drugs are one of the most cherished heritages of the race's experience down the ages. By far the greater number of them that are most valuable come to us from the very old times. After all, quinine is some 300 years old and mercury has been used for 700 years at least, arsenic for 2,500 years, rhubarb as long and probably much



longer, and not a few of the other stand-bys in medicine are even older than this. They represent quite literally the distillation of medical experience through the centuries.

**Cure Materials.**—Men started out with the idea that while a beneficent Providence has permitted disease He had created all around mankind the means of curing those diseases if only man would bestir himself and find out what they were. As a result of this impression every kind of material under the sun has been used for the cure of human ailments and practically all of them with reported good success, at least at the beginning. Every plant and herb and root has been treated in various ways to extract its healing qualities. Practically every animal product that we know, including the excretions and the very vermin that live on animals, have been used as remedies. The mineral kingdom has been placed under similar contribution and always “cures” have been reported from everything. When materials were poisonous, then of course it was important to use only small amounts of them. Very often combinations of drugs were announced as proving so much more efficacious than the simple drug materials of which they were composed. Mankind has gone right on finding new remedies and working wonders with them and patients have announced themselves as *cured* by all sorts of materials, and then after a time further experience has shown that ninety-nine out of every hundred and more of these valued drugs have proved to be absolutely useless or even slightly harmful. The patients who took them, confident in their good effect, cured themselves of their ills because of the suggestion that went with the drugs, so that a very great amount of



good for mankind was accomplished by their administration.

**Drugs and Fishes.**—Dear old Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes once ventured to say that “if all the drugs that had ever been used for the cure of human ills were gathered together and thrown into the sea it would be ever so much better for humanity and ever so much worse for the fishes.” And yet the autocrat was not looking at the question from quite the right standpoint. A great many of these drugs were no good in the sense of having any physically curative effect on disease, not a few of them were even harmful to some degree, but so long as a favorable suggestion went with them and people were led to believe that they would do them good they were greatly benefited by them. It is not the drug that counts in the great majority of cases, but the suggestion that goes with it. Once this is understood it is only a question of finding something that will carry the suggestion. A nauseous drug will do it better than a nice tasting one, because almost any one is sure to feel that almost anything that tastes as bad as that just simply *must* do you good. But this subject is important enough to deserve a special chapter, “Cures With a Punch.”

**Egyptian Drugging.**—Some four thousand years ago the Egyptians had a whole series of remedies good for nearly every disease that flesh is heir to, of which they were very proud. Altogether about seven hundred of them were mentioned in the Ebers Papyrus, which is the oldest medical document in existence, and not one of them had found a place in it until it had been tried and proved to work successfully in the “cure” of disease. Not a single one of these remedial sub-

stances—the Egyptians drew their curative agents from the animal and mineral as well as the vegetable kingdom—is in use now. At that time they were curing patients every day with them. The Egyptian physicians were held in high honor, some of them were advanced to the rank of gods after their death and were considered to be the equals of the kings. The first great Egyptian physician that we know of was called “The Master of Secrets” and “The Consoler of the Afflicted.” It is easy to understand the wonderful recoveries that had followed his ministrations for which these titles of honor and reverence were given. We have his remedies, however, and of course they are no good now, although they did a lot of good then. That is all, indeed, that can be expected of any remedy, that it shall cure the people of a particular generation or perhaps decade or year, but it must not be expected to go on curing people, at least it never has done so in the whole history of the race—with a very few notable exceptions.

Of course everybody in our time feels that it is quite to be expected that the poor people of three thousand, four thousand, five thousand years ago, should have been fooled into thinking themselves cured by all sorts of remedies that had no physical efficacy. They would be quite sure, however, that things are very different in our time. The ancients and the medieval people knew no better, but the great advance in scientific medicine which has taken place in recent years entirely precludes the possibility of patients being “taken in” in any such way as this in our time. We know too much for any such foolishness to affect us. We are not as gullible as they were, we have left their credulity behind

in the progress of the race and shed their superstitions as mankind had advanced in the course of evolution.

Because of this prevalent persuasion that our modern folk are above the foolishness of thinking that remedies cure them when they have no physical efficacy, I shall speak in this chapter on Drug Cures, only of those that have been in highly recommended use, and because they have worked many cures, have been considered marvelous blessings for humanity since the time of Harvey. His discovery of the circulation of the blood may be looked upon as the basis for modern scientific medicine. Since then, we have come to know some of the real action of drugs, the physiological activity as well as the absolute chemical formula, and this precious knowledge has raised up a safeguard that would presumably keep us from being led into the absurd credulousness of the older time. There may be absurd trivial therapeutic movements that occur in certain narrow circles, but no such widespread delusion of cure as was the case in the long ago. How little of truth there is in any such assumption is illustrated very well by a little of the history of a wonderful panacea from ancient times which held over long after Harvey's day and maintained its popularity almost into the last generation of the nineteenth century.

**The Theriac Cure-all.**—The most called-for remedy in all the countries at the time of Harvey, so far as the great middle class of people were concerned, continued to be popular in many places for several centuries afterwards and even at the middle of the nineteenth century was still more used than probably any other medicine. This was the famous *theriacum* or theriac, a remedy as old as Galen, probably older, and which has

undoubtedly made more "cures" than any other drug compilation. Even in Galen's time, the prescription for it was extremely complex and a little bit later it came to be spoken of as a "calendar" prescription because it had as many or more ingredients in it than the days of the month. Somehow it was felt that, with all these medicines in it, it could scarcely fail to do good for any disease, no matter what it was, because there was something for everything in it. It was a veritable gunshot prescription with the shot so scattering that it was sure to hit something, provided it was sent anywhere near the general direction of the object at which it was aimed.

Harvey's discovery and the beginning of scientific medicine did not affect the popularity of this old stand-by among the medicines. Indeed, we owe to that popularity the incentive to the studies in the physiological action of drugs that finally made it impossible for educated physicians, at least, to use the theriac. Claude Bernard, the great French physiologist, has told the comical story of it. As a boy he worked in a drug store. He found there was one remedy that was sold more than any other in this small town in western France. This was the theriac. It was kept in a great big jug and the bottles of those who brought in their own were filled with it, or other bottles were supplied to customers for a consideration. There were many old people who declared that without this remedy they would not have been able to live through the winter, or to live as long as they did; and that when they took it they felt like new people, and when they were without it they felt languid and depressed, slipping down the

hill into desperate illness until they took to the life preserver once more.

It was a cure for colds as well as for indigestion, for the various bronchitises as well as for heart trouble, for depression and nervousness, for both mind and body. The druggist boy who sold so much of it felt that the whole mystery of medicine was contained in this one remedy. Soon in the round of his duties as a nascent pharmacist he found the secret of it. All the spoiled medicines in the store went into the theriac jug. Whenever a mistake was made in compounding a prescription it was poured into the jug. Whenever there was a drug preparation left standing so long that there might be a reasonable suspicion that the strength of it had either diminished or increased until they did not care to dispense it in the regular fashion, that, too, went into the jug. When by some chance a label came off a bottle and it was not quite sure what was in it the rule of the store was: "Dump it into the theriac jug." Fortunately all the really active ingredients were so diluted that the resulting compound was not likely to do harm or at most only infinitesimal harm, and it is easy to understand that this hodge-podge of drugs of all kinds had a thoroughgoing medicinal taste and in those days of the herbal preparations was sufficiently nauseous to make even the most hardened veteran taker of drugs feel that he was getting something for his money.

This stuff was making hundreds of "cures" in that neighborhood every year and similarly compounded theriacs were curing thousands of people throughout Europe. The theriac was not always made in such hit or miss fashion as this, but, even in its palmy days of



success and very definite prescribing, it always contained at least a score and usually more of different drugs. Claude Bernard took the lesson to himself and declared that sometime or other he hoped to make such investigations of drugs as would render this sort of drugging out of the question. He did, so far as medical science is concerned. But we still have proprietary medicines with wonderful reputations for "cures," backed by testimonials of all kinds, some of them from judges, lawyers, clergymen, that are quite as vague in their composition, quite as hit or miss in their direction and that are supposed to cure quite as many diseases as ever the theriac did. Some of them are proclaimed to be panaceas for rheumatism and catarrh, for indigestion and dyspepsia, for kidney disease and liver disease, for intestinal complaints and all the manifold organic affections that may make people miserable. We still have our theriacs just as much as they ever had them in the old times and a great many of the educated people of our time take them and announce themselves as *cured* by them and are ready to give testimonials to that effect, so that others may share in the wonderful efficacy of this beneficent medicine.

**The Period of the Purgatives.**—The theriac was used for something more than 200 years after Harvey and was very popular. In the meantime, many other drugs and combination of drugs were lauded as saving people's lives and producing wonderful effects in bringing health out of disease. The laxatives and purgatives particularly have been the basis of many much-praised medicines. For nearly five centuries antimony was a favorite popular medicine. It did not matter what was the matter with you, you took antimony and

proceeded to get better. To have deprived people of their antimony would have seemed to many of them almost surely to consign them to suffering and death. Rich and poor dosed themselves with antimony. When for a time in the late seventeenth century antimony had lost some of its popularity, it was brought back again when a quack was summoned to treat Louis XIV of France and it was said saved his life by giving him a dose of antimony. The fact of the matter was that the king was ill of typhoid fever, which runs a definite course of twenty-one to twenty-eight days and sometimes more, but that bit of nosology was unknown at the time, and the royal physicians tried to break the fever and could not; so in the fourth week the quack was summoned, gave the king antimony, fortunately or unfortunately, did not kill him and then, two days later, the fever broke, as it was due to do because of the regular course of the affection, and antimony received a great new boom and continued to be used copiously on into the nineteenth century.

When antimony declined in favor among those who did not like its drastic purgative effects, calomel was popular. There were any number of people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who were quite sure that life would be very empty for them and would inevitably be bound up with suffering and even death, perhaps, if they could not take a dose of calomel occasionally. Some of them took it at regular intervals and would have been quite lost without it. To have been deprived of it would have made them depressed and incapable. When they did not feel like themselves and could not get things done, when their food did not digest properly and their liver was surely sluggish,



when they were quite sure that their kidneys were not quite as active as they might be and their skin was breaking out with liver spots or other blotches, then they took calomel and all was well. The ancients took hellebore in the springtime to save them from melancholia and nervous depression, the moderns took calomel at various times during the year and felt grateful to the Providence that had provided so simple and so sure a remedy for all the vague ills of mankind. The number of people who were cured by calomel in the seventeenth, eighteenth and even the nineteenth centuries must mount into the millions.

Calomel is a very useful drug but it has no powers of producing such wonderful effects as people fondly deluded themselves into believing. It acts on the intestines and produces a series of movements, but its action on the liver is very problematical and the supposition that it does act is probably mainly due to the fact that the presence of the mercurial salt usually causes a distinct darkening of the excretions and this was taken to indicate that bile was now flowing freely. Its action on the kidneys has even less justification in actual observation, though the draining through the intestines consequent upon the large doses of calomel that used to be given and taken, twenty, thirty and even forty grains, relieved the kidneys of the need for working as much as usual for several days. Calomel is used comparatively little now, it has ceased to be a mystery, it has a very small place and the cures that it was supposed to have worked were simply due to the fact that when people took it they suggested to themselves that they were going to feel better just about the same as telling them-

selves now "Every day in every way you will feel better and better." And then of course they did. Calomel in the large doses in which it was given did physically much more harm than good, but the mental effect more than compensated for this and the renewed nerve impulses which flowed down from an encouraged central nervous system under the influence of a lightened mind accomplished often simply wonderful results. Hence the prestige of calomel which now is gone forever.

**Berkeley's Tar Water.**—One of the most amusing incidents in the history of drugs is that of Bishop Berkeley's tar water. Bishop Berkeley is one of the most famous of English philosophers. His works are very well known and have been not a little studied here in America because Lord Berkeley spent some two years in this country near Newport, R. I., and is said to have elaborated an important part of his philosophic system there and to have deeply influenced Jonathan Edwards, the first representative of philosophy in America. After his return he was made Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland, where he had been born, though of course he came of old English stock. For nearly ten years he was very much occupied with a scheme for converting the American Indians and he organized a project to found, for that purpose, a college in Bermuda. He was an extremely learned man of very high character intent on doing just as much good for others as possible and all in all probably the most distinguished and best beloved man of his generation in the British Isles. Sir James Mackintosh said of him: "Ancient learning, exact science, polished society, modern literature and the fine arts contributed to adorn and enrich

the mind of this accomplished man." All his contemporaries agreed with the satirist in ascribing

"To Berkeley every virtue under heaven."

"Even the discerning, fastidious and turbulent Atterbury said after an interview with him: 'So much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence and so much humility I did not think had been the portion of any but angels till I saw this gentleman.'"

The surprising thing about his career, however, is his famous essay concerning the virtues of tar water—an essay which according to Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes "begins with the receipt for his favorite fluid and slides by gentle gradations into an examination of the sublimest doctrines of Plato." Intelligence, Bishop Berkeley had, one might think, almost to superfluity. He had, besides, a deal of common sense in most things but when it came to his own health he demonstrated very clearly how little any one can trust his own judgment.

Bishop Berkeley found that he could cure himself and his friends of every ill to which flesh is heir by means of tar water. This precious fluid was made by stirring a gallon of water with a quart of tar and letting it stand forty-eight hours and pouring off the clear water. Absolutely nothing of any chemical significance had been dissolved out of the tar by the water but the smell of the tar clung to the fluid and so it was rather easy to persuade one's self that one must be taking something. Modern physicians use it occasionally for diluting lotions which are meant to prevent itching. Bishop Berkeley, however, found it a cure for everything. Yes, quite literally everything. According to

his own list it cured "gout and fevers, coughs, pleurisy, peripneumony, erysipelas, asthma, whether it came from the heart or the kidneys, indigestion, hysterics, mortification, scurvy, gout and fevers, cachexia—which in that period usually meant cancer—hypochondria and liver disease, dropsy" (which at that time meant kidney and heart disease), and was besides an excellent preservative for the teeth and gums. It was particularly beneficial to ladies for their special ills and for men of studious and sedentary lives so likely to suffer from many symptoms because of their lack of exercise. Too much of it could not be taken, it must be taken for at least a month before much effect could be expected of it and sometimes two or three months were necessary to bring about the beginning of relief from it.

**Good for Nothing.**—Bishop Berkeley realized that the very fact that it was good for so many things might make many people perhaps "conclude that it is good for nothing." He was quite sure, however, that it had been tried and found efficient. He declared "men may censor and object as they please, but I appeal to time and experiment." During a time of fever epidemic he had no less than twenty-five fevers in his own family cured "by this medicinal water drunk copiously." It was good for children and the aged, a life saver in many crises, a wonderful preserver of health and restorer of youth and strength. Berkeley is the great idealist philosopher, one of the greatest thinkers perhaps in English philosophy, but he held two very odd opinions: namely, "that tar water was everything and that the whole material universe was nothing." Tar water is still with us, but that very fact only demonstrates beyond all doubt what a fool dear Bishop Berkeley made of himself over it.

**Smell Cures.**—Tar water may be called a “smell cure.” There was practically nothing else in it except the rather strong, penetrating aromatic odor of tar. We have had any number of other smell cures in the history of medicine, though none that attracted quite such lofty intellectual attention as Bishop Berkeley’s tar water. After all it is pretty well understood among physicians that the principal efficacy of such substances as asafetida and valerian was due to their penetrating and pervasive odor. There seems even good reason to think that onions owed not a little of their reputation as being particularly healthful and health-giving vegetables to the odor which they left after them and which was likely to be so marked, particularly when they had been eaten raw. Undoubtedly, too, the odor of certain of the steracaceous materials which at various times have been used as drugs, in the sense of medicines for the cure of many ills, represented a large factor in whatever efficaciousness they possessed. The pungent odor of certain crushed insects must probably range them in the same class when used in medicine. In a word, an odor can release energy for the cure of various affections quite as well as anything else and Bishop Berkeley’s tar water is only a typical example of that fact.

**The Era of the Sarsaparillas.**—Claude Bernard’s work put an end to the régime of calomel and venesection, but his exposure of the theriac and of many of the old-fashioned herbal remedies failed completely to put an end to the popularity of compounds of various kinds which now were presented to the public in another way. It was just when the great French physiologist’s investigations were making such magnificent contributions to scientific medicine that what may be called the era of



the sarsaparillas began. Sarsaparilla is a medicinal preparation made from the root of smilax. Early in the nineteenth century a German physician thought that he had found it to be very valuable as a tonic and alterative, that is, as a medicine that would give an appetite and a sense of well-being and would change any processes in the body that were going wrong. On the strength of these clinical observations, physicians all over the world used sarsaparilla very commonly and, after a time, came to the conclusion that it was of little or no value. It was sufficiently bitter and medicinal in flavor, as a rule, to make people realize that they were taking medicine, and many of them proceeded to get better, and most of them attributed their betterment to the sarsaparilla, but medical experience showed that there was no good reason to think so.

Just about the time that the physicians were giving it up, certain proprietary medicine makers took it up. They proceeded to advertise very extensively that sarsaparilla was a blood purifier and a stimulant of secretions and an alterative valuable in the counteraction of even the most serious of infectious diseases, a preventive of consumption, a sure cure for lues—the blood disease par excellence—a fine remedy for anemia, a corrector of nutritional processes that were going wrong, in a word, a panacea for most of the ills to which human flesh is heir.

These sarsaparilla preparations were widely advertised. They were the first nationally advertised articles in America. All the country papers carried quarter pages of the special preparation and occasionally, when a special drive was made, half pages or whole pages were taken in connection with local counter and window dis-



plays. All the "patent insides," the "boiler plate" forms which were furnished to the country papers, carried sarsaparilla "ads." Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in advertising, but millions of dollars were received for the preparations. Every drug store in the country carried them in stock, but after a time so did every grocery store. There were literally millions of people in this country who swore by sarsaparilla. Many of them were quite sure that they had been sinking into an early grave and sarsaparilla had just taken them by the hand and lifted them up and given them renewed vigor, restored their appetite, regulated their bowels and given them back health and strength and vigor and they were perfectly willing to tell all the world so. A gullible and demanding generation stepped up by the hundreds of thousands and bought and took sarsaparilla faithfully.

There is probably more than a score of large fortunes in America that were made in the manufacture—and sale—of sarsaparilla preparations. It was the easiest way to make money that ever happened, and the best of it was it distributed its beneficence. All the country papers received their share and all the drug stores and country grocery stores got their forty per cent on every sale—even the city department stores, until they began to cut prices—and the users were given renewed health and strength. The sarsaparilla proprietors were benefactors of their kind.

Of course, no one takes any sarsaparilla now. We know better. We have come to appreciate that there is no active principle in sarsaparilla that affects the human body to any notable extent. It is doubtful if it is even an appetizer. It is just a somewhat nauseous

compound that acts upon the mind. Occasionally, when physicians want to conceal the taste of some particularly unpleasant medicine, they use sarsaparilla as a vehicle for its administration on the general principle that it is so nasty itself that it will help to make the other ingredients less disturbing to the taste. The sarsaparillas had a wonderful effect upon the mind. The active ingredient in them was not the medicine on the inside of the bottle, but the printer's ink on the outside, and the still larger amount of printer's ink that was administered through the eyes of readers of the newspapers as well as the special advertising literature, the almanacs<sup>1</sup> and the like which were issued and the testimonials which were distributed. Great was sarsaparilla and great was its vogue, and now it is no more, only the memory of it remains, oh yes! and the fortunes that were made in its distribution, while sterling philanthropists took on themselves the task of doing the world good.

**The Whisky Tonics.**—After this sarsaparilla incident it would seem as though Americans ought to have had enough of proprietary medicines for a century or more, but surely for a generation at least. Almost immediately, however, after the disillusionment over the

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<sup>1</sup> Uncle Henry, who in his page each week in *Collier's*, has a way of hitting social disorders of various kinds very like that of Dooley in the long ago, reminds us of what the almanac meant to the preceding generation. They used to be distributed at the stores, not only the drug stores but the grocery stores about Christmas time and were looked upon as a sort of Christmas present. They had columns of jokes on every second page and a few cartoons, but they had most precious advice with regard to the ills of mankind and how to cure them by the taking of some particular remedy or perhaps two or three remedies manufactured by the firm that got out the almanac. It is surprising how seriously they were taken. Very few people failed to resist their suggestion that they would surely be the better for a little medicine. Some of these almanacs became great national institutions. Of one of them Uncle Henry said "They can talk about Shakespeare, but in my opinion old Hostetter—and Ayer—had more influence on the national life than any of 'em."

sarsaparillas, came what should be called the era of the whisky tonics. It was a most wonderful period and they were most wonderful medicines. They were usually called nerve tonics or the name contained in some way a reference to nerves. The advertising of them announced, however, that they were good for nervous indigestion and nearly all the gastro-intestinal affections and that by stimulating the nervous system they made every other organ in the body take on new health. The various neuritises were cured by them and, as neuritis is a word that has come to replace rheumatism in recent years, and rheumatism has always covered a multitude of diagnostic sins and failure to think, this represented a very wide field.

The medicines were widely advertised and soon the sale began to be even larger than that of the sarsaparillas. National advertising had developed in the meantime and the sign board had come to help out the newspaper, so we were greeted from every curve on the railroad and every attractive bit of scenery with the admonition to take somebody or other's nerve tonic and renew our health and strength and live our lives to their full length without impairment. The drug stores distributed flying sheets, vaudeville houses had notices on their curtains, the religious press particularly teemed with advertising and special reading notices and so millions of people took the wonderful new tonics and millions of dollars of money flowed into the pockets of their proprietors.

Mothers were recommended to give them to their children and it was declared that the one way to be sure to have healthy children was to see that the mother before and after the birth of the children got regular

doses of these marvelous remedies. When the child came into question the United States Government took a hand in the matter and had an analysis of the remedies made. They were found to contain alcohol in such quantities that practically taking them was about the same as drinking cheap whisky as it used to be served over the bar in the pre-Volstead days. Some of them had only half as much alcohol as ordinary whisky contained, that is diluted about the way that most toppers preferred to dilute their whiskies, unless it is the very smooth whisky of the highest quality. People were recommended to take a tablespoonful of it three times a day and after a time to increase the dose. That would be the equivalent of about half an ounce of diluted whisky before each meal. It made a very good cocktail but rather stronger than most cocktails are taken. The other ingredients amounted to so little as to be scarcely worth noticing. There were some bitter principles that concealed the taste of the whisky, but had no therapeutic significance.

The United States Government, as a result of this investigation, refused to permit many of these so-called remedies to be sold without a revenue stamp, because they represented whisky rather than medicine. The advertising of a number of them, especially those containing recommendations of the remedy for children, were forbidden the use of the mails. They simply represented a fraud on the community. The scandal of the exposure finally brought about the passage of such pure food and drug laws as required the printing on the label of each proprietary medicine bottle exactly the percentage of alcohol which it contained. This put an end rather effectively to the whisky tonics. When people

knew what they were taking, they refused to take it any longer, but in the meantime many hundreds of thousands of people had felt themselves greatly benefited by these doses of poor whisky taken three times a day and some of them were quite sure that they had been cured of severe ills for which they had been unable to find any relief. Not a few of them had made the rounds of doctors in vain. They were not all ignorant people, on the contrary many of them were educated, some of them were actually professional men. Not a few of the women patients, particularly, who proclaimed themselves cured by these whisky tonics were college graduates. A great many of them were high school graduates. Such are the ways of men—and women—with cures.

**Convents and Cures.**—One of the most comical experiences with regard to these whisky tonics was the fact that several convents allowed their names to be used in the advertising and declared that their members had received great benefit from taking the remedy. At the moment, as the editor of a medical journal, I was very much interested in the subject and wrote to the good mothers superior with regard to it. Several failed to answer me, two told me that they had received bottles of the remedy free by mail and had acknowledged their receipt and this was taken as sufficient grounds to use their names in the advertising and though they had protested, found they could do nothing short of an expensive legal process. Two of them wrote and told me, however, that the remedy had been sent to them free of charge and they had used it in certain of the chronic illnesses of the sisters, especially in those suffering from nervous and digestive affections and that they had been so much benefited that they felt they ought to recom-



mend the remedy to others for the good that it would do them. When I sent them the government analysis, one of them expressed regret that the community had been deluded into such an unfortunate public utterance, but the other, who was evidently one of those who had herself been benefited, declared that there must be some mistake and that it was a wonderful remedy, capable of doing marvelous things.<sup>2</sup>

**Feminine Ills.**—Above all, we have had a long series of the most wonderful cures for women's ills. There have been prescriptions of all kinds announced by large and emphatic advertisements warranted to cure all of

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<sup>2</sup> Overweening faith in drugs is supposed to be a characteristic particularly of ignorant, unthinking people who are readily suggestible. I remember in the early days of my practice feeling that I was in the presence of a typical example of this ignorant feeling toward drugs when a good old colored woman who used to do cleaning for us consulted me one day. She had in her hand a large bottle of medicine which the lady of the neighboring house had asked her to throw out, telling her, by the way, that though it had cost two dollars it had never been used. The old colored woman did not like to think that this much money should be wasted, especially when it was a question of "real medicine prescribed by a doctor." So she brought the bottle to me to ask me if I could possibly find anything the matter with her for which the medicine might do good. She was a good, hardworking woman and I did not know that she had anything the matter with her, but she felt that there must be something that the medicine would benefit, and she did not want to throw it away. I had often heard of eating things in order not to have to throw them away, but this was my first experience with saving medicines that way. Alas, I could find nothing the matter with her. So the medicine had to go, but not without a deal of poignant regret on Aunt Sally's part. Later when I heard the story of how Carlyle, hearing that his friend Henry Taylor was ill rushed off to see him with what was left of some medicine which had helped Mrs. Carlyle,—the English philosopher thinking that it would surely do his friend good, too, though he did not know what had been the matter with Mrs. Carlyle nor what was now the cause of Taylor's illness, I knew that my experience with the colored woman was just the result of a human failing for the mysterious ways of medicine and not at all due to ignorance. Just think for a moment all that Mrs. Carlyle might have had the matter with her which Taylor, from the very nature of things could not possibly have had the matter with him. Yet here was one of the deepest thinkers of the nineteenth century hurrying to him with his wife's medicine, confident it must do him good as it had her.



the special ills of womankind. Some of them have been advertising for several generations now, or at least more than fifty years, and are still doing a lucrative business at the old stand. They were invented or first compounded, for of course there was no invention about them, in the days when there was still a persuasion prevalent that certain of the herbal medicines were very effective in curing ills of many kinds. Some of them were supposed to have been found by one of those happy accidents which would seem to indicate that Providence was at work taking special care of the long-suffering devout female sex, so many of whose ills and aches and pains were due to the fact that the Creator apparently had to delegate to women the all-important duty, but hard task, of carrying on the race. Even those who were not engaged in that beneficent mission, and above all those who had never had the proper chance to take part in this divine commission, were almost constant sufferers. These cures for women's ills, in the days when a great many women took very little exercise and must have had many pains and aches, secured a great vogue. There was nothing of any special curative value in them. But that made no difference. They were taken with the promise of cure rising into positive persuasion, after the tale of previous cures was heard. The suggestion worked. Every day in every way, the patients told themselves as they took the medicine, they felt better. Soon they were well—striking examples of the efficacy of the medicine whatever it might be.

**Masculine Ills.**—But the devoted female sex were not the only ones for whom drug cures that had no effective pharmaceutic principle in them proved eminently curative. The men had their failings in this line

as well as the women, and no difference between the sexes in susceptibility to drug suggestion can be found. The typical instance of a drug cure for men which was immensely popular and on which a great deal of money was spent in advertising, but ever so much more money spent on buying, of course, was lithium. About a generation ago or a little bit more, it was suggested by some of the pharmacologists that certain of the salts of lithium, especially when taken in the diluted form in which they occurred in natural waters and medicinal springs, was of very great value for the cure and prevention of the formation of calculi in the human body. Lithium itself, from its Greek root which means a stone, as if this were the stone metal or metalloid substance, probably has very little effect on the human body. Its name, however, naturally suggested some possible connection between stony formations and concretions and their prevention, and it is probable that this is all there ever was to connect lithium with calculous disease, that is, with the formation of stones in the various hollow organs of the body. This was sufficient, however, to give lithium, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, quite a vogue among physicians.

**Lithium Waters.**—The lithium and lithia springs throughout the country followed up this popular persuasion of curative value with properly suggestive advertising, and lithium waters were consumed by the hundreds of thousands of gallons every year. The government became interested in the question of pure food and drugs, some years ago, and made a careful analysis of these so-called natural lithium waters. It was found that so far as some of the most famous of them were concerned there was more lithium in the Potomac as it

flowed by Washington than there was in the much advertised and much consumed natural lithium water. It was found further that the Potomac was not particularly rich in lithium and that only the minutest traces of it occurred in the water and that it would take probably some thousands of gallons, at least, of Potomac water to provide what would ordinarily be considered a single reasonable therapeutic dose of lithium. And yet for more than half a century, patients all over the United States had been quite sure that they were greatly benefited and many were convinced that they had been actually enabled to avoid severe surgical intervention by taking the fluid.

The one really efficacious factor in this lithium water was not the lithium but the water. A great many people take entirely too little water to run the fluid mechanics of their bodies properly. We use up something like three quarts of water a day in the various bodily activities and comparatively few people take this amount.

It is very probable that in those who had a tendency to the formation of calculi, the presence in the body of large quantities of fluid was quite enough of itself to prevent to some degree the further formation of calculi, for such concretions, usually of microbic origin, are enlarged by deposits on them as the result of the supersaturation of fluids in the various hollow organs of the body. Whenever there is a considerable quantity of fluid present, there is a tendency toward the solution of whatever concretions are already present rather than of further formation of them. It is not unlikely, even, that the presence of a superabundance of fluid has a tendency to dissolve the sharp edges of crystalline struc-

tures and therefore keep them from being such a source of irritation as they would otherwise be.

Those who were relieved in any way, however, were quite sure it was the lithium that was effecting its beneficent work. It is very doubtful, if they had been advised to take water in the same quantities that lithium water was prescribed for them, whether they would have continued to take it. Good habits in the taking of water are very precious, but are rather readily broken in upon, and once a break in the habit occurs the custom is soon forgotten. When people felt that they were taking some precious active drug like lithium supposed directly to cure them, then it was much easier for them to keep up the good habit. Water is too cheap to cure most people. The rich man at Rome complained to Galen that he could not be cured by these drugs that were so cheap that even the poor could obtain them to cure themselves and he must have something more expensive for that purpose, for surely the remedy would be more efficacious just in proportion to the increased amount of money that he had to pay for it.

It might be expected that such striking disillusionments with regard to the proposed value of remedies would make the American people definitely incredulous of claims of curative values, and as a result the United States would be a bad field for them. It is, on the contrary, the best field in the world. There are all sorts of proprietary remedies, now selling and making large fortunes for their proprietors, that are just as useful as the lithia waters were or as harmful as the whisky tonics or as merely nauseous as the sarsaparillas or as amusing, if their whole story were known, as Bishop Berkeley's tar water or as the theriac. Lots of people are being

cured by them. More people than ever in proportion to the whole number of our population are taking them and announcing simply marvelous good results from them. Human nature remains just the same and so we have all sorts of tonics and kidney cures and consumption cures and cough and cold cures and above all rheumatism cures and nerve tonics and blood purifiers.

The *modus operandi* of the proprietary medicine manufacturers is very well known. To begin with, you need some money to be sunk in advertising. Next you need a good advertising manager and if he is a member of the firm, so much the better, and lastly, of course, you need a formula, but that is of mighty small importance compared with the other two elements of the business. The formula should have a good medicinal taste if it is fluid, though not too nasty, for our generation has gotten away from the persuasion that a nasty medicine must be efficacious just in proportion to its nastiness. The less active the ingredients of the remedy are, the better, for there is less likelihood of bad effects from it, and it must not be forgotten that the influence of the medicine is to be exerted on the mind rather than on the body. As has been said, the printer's ink is the all-important ingredient to these remedies.

If well advertised they always sell. After they have begun to sell the "cures" help greatly to further sales. There are actually many thousands of people being "cured" every year in this country just now in the third decade of the twentieth century of all sorts of ills by remedies that have no very definite physical action. The remedies are advertised by the "cures" they make. They cure what are supposed to be organic diseases. Above all they cure a lot of people, for the time being at least,

of complaints—what a nice expressive word that is—that have been making their victims miserable, and by the same token, their friends as well, and have been sending them around to physicians and healers and health resorts and all the other means of cure in our time. Such is human nature, such it has been for 5,000 years, such it will always remain so far as its history enables us to judge of the future by the past. This will, I think, be abundantly clear after the remaining chapters of the book have brought out the very human tendency to be “cured” by all sorts of things that is so characteristic of humanity at all times and never more so than in our own.



## CHAPTER IV

### "CURES WITH A PUNCH"

THE history of cures has many funny chapters, but surely the funniest of them all is that which tells the story of what may, in modern parlance, be called "cures with a punch." These cures all possessed an extraneous element apart from their real or supposed physical action which gave them very special activity. Moss may be curative, but the moss scraped from a dead man's skull or mandrake gathered in a graveyard in the dark of the moon at the midnight hour when ghosts walk to impart some of their supernatural virtue to all with whom they come in contact, must be marvelously efficacious. They were so compounded as to exert a very strong influence on the minds of men so that it is not surprising to learn that they produced very wonderful physical effects on the body. As a rule they did not disappoint such expectations of them as were raised. The ideas associated with them affected the human mind so deeply that it is very easy to understand that alterations in the circulation and in the equilibrium of the nervous system even of far-reaching importance might very well occur as a consequence of the mental impetus given by these cures.

A favorite word in medicine, perhaps because of its vagueness, is alterative. That is the scientific or at least medical term for a substance which produces or is supposed to produce an alteration in the metabolism or

the nutritional processes of the body, or which modifies the circulation in certain parts and organs and thereby causes a very distinct change in the coördination of the elements of the system. These "cures with a punch" deserve to be classed among the alteratives in the sense that people could not very well be quite the same after having been subjected to them, that is if they once had the faith in them that is implied by their making use of them.

To read the older medical literature and learn of all the "cures" that were made by such remedies is to have a new book of humor opened to one. All the vague ills of mankind were cured; and most of the serious but chronic affections which lasted for months and sometimes years were benefited by them. The patient's attitude of mind toward himself and his ailment was so altered that he could not help but be better for a time. He had been depressed into a mood in which he feared nothing would do him good and if his faith was properly aroused every available element of vitality was awakened into activity. Hence no wonder that we hear of paralytics being made better. Some of the so-called paralytics were suffering only from psychoneurosis—hysterical paralysis, we call it now—and they were cured. The reports of such "cures" made every real paralytic take on new hope. Even the pains of cancer were lessened for a time and heart patients were encouraged, that is, took renewed heart, and the virtuous circle of good influence went on merrily and vigorously.

Perhaps the best illustration for these remedies "with a punch" is to be found in the difference that was claimed to exist between certain plants as cultivated in an ordinary garden, or as grown in a graveyard. Somehow

in the older times it was considered that when a plant sprang up in a graveyard, especially if it was one that had not been deliberately planted there, it possessed an efficacy for the healing of humanity much greater than when grown anywhere else. The garden variety might be more vigorous and apparently contain more of whatever curative principles the plant was supposed to have, yet the graveyard variety was considered to carry with it a power that had come to it from its special conditions of growth. Buried human bodies were assumed to impart some of the vital forces that still remain in them, the vegetative life at least, which so often has been known to cause the growth of hair and nails in the corpse, to the earth around them, and this in turn was communicated to the plants that grew in that earth. As a consequence, such plants made ever so much better medicaments than the common garden variety. Just how this occurred was a mystery, but this only added to the appeal to the mind; it was felt that it *must* be so. Undoubtedly remedies prepared from these graveyard plants acted much more efficaciously than any others on a great many persons. That was a matter of observation so common as to be quite certain. The testimony of many cured patients, some of whom had been to many physicians without securing relief, might be adduced for it.

There were special graveyard drugs that had a wide reputation. Mandrake was one of these. In the Middle Ages the plant enjoyed a particular superstitious regard because the root of it is often forked like a man and the first part of the name was supposed to emphasize the relationship between the plant and a human being. These were the “signatures” on the plant which made

it clear that it must be good for human ills. It is the same as *mandragora* and belongs to the night shade family of plants which have of course a very definite poisonous effect. This is not very severe, however, and mandrake was used very commonly in medicine. The plant is mentioned in Genesis and we are told how Reuben went out in the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field and brought them unto his mother Leah. Even at this time they were used for medicinal purposes.

The plant was supposed to be so human in its qualities that, according to the well-known reference in Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," it shrieked like a mortal when torn out of the earth. "Living mortals, hearing those shrieks, run mad." The mandrake, however, was always ever so much more effective if it were gathered in a graveyard, especially in the dark of the moon. The superstitious feeling with regard to graveyards made many people shun them in the olden time, particularly, of course, at night, and above all on moonless nights, for no one would then be around and the gatherer would have to venture alone into the very home of the dead to gather the plant. It is easy to understand how much of "punch" this would give to the medicine obtained from it.

There were a number of other substances that partook of the mysterious curative properties of the mandrake. The most used in medicine was mummy. From the Crusades onward and perhaps even before that, mummy, that is, portions of the preserved bodies of the old Egyptians as they were dug out of the tombs, was considered to be a powerful medicine. For centuries in Europe it was thought to be a very potent

ingredient of prescriptions that were meant for difficult, obstinate, chronic cases. The reasoning with regard to it was that, since the materials of the old time in Egypt, which were employed so successfully for preserving the body, had actually succeeded in warding off the ravages of time on human tissues, though these were known to be so subject to dissolution, they must be quite capable of preventing disease processes in the body from bringing about such changes as would lead to premature death. The preservative fluids and preparations were presumed to be at least as capable of maintaining the living body whole as the dead body incorrupt. Besides, there was the feeling that these preserved bodies, since they still bore so close a resemblance to living human beings must possess something of life in them and were capable of transmitting it to the people to whom mummy was administered. The reasoning was a little inconsequential, we might think, but that all depends on the point of view and “trifles light as air become confirmations strong as holy writ” to those who will to believe. The mystery of the substances used added to the effect. The cures came of course.

It is usually supposed that such notions would only be accepted by the poor ignorant people of the Middle Ages and that in modern times they would gain no credence at all. As a matter of fact, however, mummy continued to be used quite commonly until the middle of the eighteenth century and even a little later. And the reason why it was used was because of the “cures” worked by it. There was abundant evidence for them from the only people who deserve credence under such circumstances, the persons who had been “cured.”

It is almost astounding to read the wonders of healing that were attributed to it. People who were wasting away until it was thought there was not an inkling of hope for them took mummy, regained their appetite and then ate themselves into health. The aches and pains of all kinds of the old were the most frequent "cures." Of course it was usually considered a last desperate remedy that might mean kill or cure, though it was very expensive and was administered in such small quantities that there was little danger of harm from it. Undoubtedly much of what was sold for mummy in the apothecary shops, for it could be obtained there, was sophisticated material. Ordinary meat would be soaked in preservatives, blackened and impregnated with pitch and then palmed off as a genuine article by somebody who claimed to be a pilgrim from the Holy Land who had passed through Egypt on the way. Many a chronic ache and pain, especially headaches and joint pains that had lasted for months at least and sometimes for years at intervals, yielded to the marvelous influence of such "mummy" when properly administered.

There was another curious medicinal substance not unlike mummy in certain of its correlations which enjoyed a reputation for making cures even more wonderful than mummy, though in particularly difficult cases the two substances combined with mandrake, torn from the earth of a graveyard, amid its shrieks in the dark of the moon, were guaranteed to give absolutely certain curative results for the most serious diseases. This was the moss gathered from the skulls of criminals who had been hanged and whose bodies had then been wrapped in chains, so as to prevent any one from



removing them, and allowed to swing from the gallows on which they had been executed outside the gate of the city until the skeleton fell to pieces. This was a hideous, barbaric practice, but it was meant to act as a deterrent on men who held up and murdered wayfarers on the highway and who especially made the neighborhood of the gate of the city a favorite place to secure their victims. The moss was gathered after months of exposure on the skull and then was scraped off to be used for medicinal purposes. This substance came to be supposed by some mental process, rather difficult now to understand, to contain something at least of the very concentration, the ultimate essence, as it were, of the vital principle of the hanged individual and therefore to have marvelous effect in imparting new strength to patients suffering from wasting or nervous diseases.

This skull moss was called *usnea* in pharmaceutical language and it could be procured in most apothecary shops. It might be supposed that belief and confidence in this, too, was confined to the Middle Ages and that surely only medieval credulousness would lead to the acceptance of the idea that it could prove curative. *Usnea* was, however, used by some of the most distinguished physicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who apparently felt that the long line of testimonies to its curative powers could not be passed over. *Usnea* was in use in Europe quite commonly until after the Declaration of Independence and the foundation of our Government in the United States. The first edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* has a serious article on *usnea* and another on mummy because these were important constituents of the pharmacopœia of that period.

There is no hint even that these substances were losing favor in medicine at that time, though the nineteenth century saw their complete disappearance from lists of remedies. Any one who wants to have a little quiet laugh at human nature should read some of the stories of the wonderful "cures" that were effected by usnea and what a blessing it was supposed to be to mankind. It "cured" above all the chronic cases, the ills that had baffled physicians, the pains and aches that made the sufferers—usually such a word as patients in our sense of patient suffering could scarcely be associated with them—who had been the subject of pity and commiseration by their friends and relatives. Their "cure" called wide attention and gave the remedy renewed vogue.

Any intimate relationship with death on the part of a remedy or mode of treatment was supposed to give it a particular "punch" in the curative direction. One of the wonderful external remedies of the older time was a piece of the rope with which a man had been hanged. These pieces commanded good prices because of their powerful effect in "turning the blood current," as was said, and hence the bringing about the cure of paralyzed or disabled limbs or wasted fingers or particularly the dead fingers, *les doigts morts*, of Reynaud's disease and other such nervous conditions. The hangman's rope was a perquisite of the hangman and he cut it into pieces for the benefit of as many as possible. The portion which had constituted the noose and had actually caused the death commanded particularly good prices. In many places there was spirited bidding for the pieces from this deathly part which often put up the price to really high figures. Manifestly no such

amount of money would have been paid, only for the fact that experience had shown that chronic ills of many kinds and particularly pains and aches and disabilities were cured by the touch of the rope. Sometimes a piece of the rope was soaked in water overnight and the water took on curative properties not unlike radium emanations in our day.

There was one thing that was still more powerful than the hangman's rope, even the noose of it, and that was the touch of the groove in the neck of the hanged man made by the rope. The portion of the body of a living person that had some diseased condition in it when brought in contact with this at once lost its disease, whatever it might be. Thomas Hardy in his *Wessex Tales* has told the story of such an occurrence after the middle of the nineteenth century and it is probable that in many country places the belief continued to exist, at least until the beginning of the nineteenth century. After all, any physician can understand very readily that an arm or leg suffering from hysterical paralysis, or laboring under an hysterical tremor or a psychoneurotic palsy of any kind might very well be cured instantly by an effect on the mind so powerful as the cold, clammy touch of a corpse at the point where the dark, ugly groove of the rope that had taken the life could be seen.

It is surprising how many disabling conditions that are not very serious in themselves are made to be quite crippling by the hysterical or psychoneurotic elements that are superadded to them. Old sprains often give lasting symptoms, most of which are neurotic. The post-dislocation pains often continue because of an hysterical element in the case. Old breaks are often

worse in rainy weather for the same reason. All these would disappear under the stress of the vehement mental influence exerted by the touch of the cold dead discolored tissues of the neck so that most of the symptoms would be "cured" at once. Of course many people suffering from real palsies and lamenesses due to neuritis and interference with circulation or to apoplexy would be disappointed, but the neuroses are ever so much commoner than the organic conditions and therefore the cures would far outnumber the failures to the consequent glorification of the remedy.

Another set of "cures with a punch" are those connected in some way with venomous reptiles. The rattlesnake, for instance, has been the source of a series of them. "Rattlesnake oil" has at many times had the reputation of curing affections that had resisted all other modes of treatment. The oil extracted from the fat of the rattlesnake is no different, as far as is known, from that of the fat of any other snake that lives on about the same material, but the fact that the rattlesnake elaborates an intense poison in some way was supposed to add greatly to the effectiveness of any of its tissue extracts when used as a cure. Just why there should be any connection between the intensity of rattlesnake poison and the healing power of its fat is not clear, but it is easy to understand what a "punch" the very idea of its rattlesnake origin would give to the suggestion of healing power. Rattlesnake oil was supposed to be a panacea for nearly all the joint pains and muscle pains of elderly people, especially for the group of symptoms that used to be gathered under the word rheumatism. But then, as we have seen all through this book, nearly every new remedy that is

presented to us with a flourish of trumpets, “cures” these, though after a while it proves that the substances employed have no physically curative effect at all.

As a boy I knew some backwoodsmen who used to bring in live rattlesnakes from the mountains, especially in the springtime, for an old physician who claimed to employ the rattlesnake oil in his practice. The snakes had to be brought in alive or the old doctor would not buy them because the oil had to be extracted immediately after death to be efficacious. The “backwoodsmen,” as they were called, used to remove the snakes’ fangs and bring them in a box or sometimes in their overcoat pockets and used to delight in disturbing the equanimity of a little country town by taking one or more of these rattlesnakes out of their pockets and putting them down on the counter or the floor of the store to the disturbance of the personnel in general and especially the ladies who might be present. This made an excellent advertisement for the old doctor and there would always be a new crop of patients, mainly old people suffering from the pains and aches which they had accumulated during the winter and which the old doctor now would proceed to rub out of them with “rattlesnake oil.” I remember stories of cures that made it perfectly clear to my boyish mind that “rattlesnake oil” was just one of the most wonderful remedies in the world. I seem to have felt that the existence of the rattlesnake, even with his fang and his poison sack and his intensely poisonous secretion and all, was perfectly justified since there went with this power to manufacture poison the power also to elaborate a wonderful cure for mankind.

Much more intelligent people, however, than the



country folk who were so much benefited have been taken with the "punch" connected with whatever comes from the rattlesnake. Rattlesnake poison itself has been at many times used with reported excellent success in the treatment of chronic diseases of various kinds. Under the name *lachesis* it gained an entrance into the pharmacopœia and not a few physicians have proclaimed their successful use of it, though as a rule it has been used by irregular practitioners of medicine. In recent years, *lachesis*, or some form of rattlesnake poison, has been used for the cure of epilepsy with reported success, but then nearly everything from the touch of profligate English kings to that of Dowie and from Greatrakes' stroking to Perkins' tractors and the denial that there is any such thing as disease, have had reported successes in the treatment of epilepsy. There is such a large neurotic element associated with minor epilepsy that it is not surprising that a cure with a "punch," like rattlesnake poison, should be reported as successful for a time. Epilepsy is, indeed, one of the diseases that has given reputation to more cures than almost any other, and by the same token has been the pitfall for more of them.

The sloughed skin of the snake, any snake, but particularly, of course, of the rattlesnake, or any other poisonous reptile, has been claimed to have wonderful curative effect in chronic throat troubles or muscular pains and aches. The skin was simply wrapped around the affected part and worn for several days or nights in succession. The application was sufficient of itself to cure many people. It is easy to understand that many throat troubles would vanish in this way for an uncomfortable sensation in the throat, the well-known



“ball in the throat” is one of the most frequent symptoms of hysteria. One of the stigmata or characteristic symptoms of many nervous conditions is a lack of sensitiveness in the back of the throat which physicians look for to confirm their diagnosis of neurosis in suspected cases. This is probably the basis of the feeling of the ball in the throat which these patients complain of.

Almost needless to say so strong a suggestion as that produced by a snake skin wrapped around the neck would cure this. Besides there is hysterical mutism or hysterical aphonia with only the whispering voice left which must be cured by suggestion and the snake slough often served very well for this. In women the thyroid gland situated in the neck is particularly liable to be influenced by neurotic conditions and the presence of the snake skin would readily affect its secretion and this has very much to do with initiating and controlling the secretions of other ductless glands. No wonder then that “cures” of all kinds of throat trouble were attributed to the rattlesnake skin, though it was the suggestion that did the work.

Of course, certain portions of the rattlesnake recommended for curative purposes affected favorably those old stand-bys—the chronic pains and aches of humanity. Headache, for instance, was cured by having the rattles of the rattlesnake to rattle with and, strange as it may seem, that unholy din is supposed to be good also for subjective noises in the ears and even for defective hearing. The rattles of the young snakes were supposed to be particularly good for this latter affection. As they do not make very much noise and as the concentration of attention adds distinctly to the power of hearing—demonstrated so clearly by Urbantschitsch of

Vienna, and others—and as tense occupation of mind will sometimes interrupt the course of noises in the ear, the mechanism of such cures through snake rattles, whenever they attract the patient's attention deeply, can be readily understood.

Among the most poignantly, even hideously, amusing of "cures with a punch" are those which had for their basis some form of excrement. It is very curious, but unfortunately only too true, that men have at all times exhibited a tendency to use excrementitious remedies. During the medieval and ancient history of medicine the urine of infants was supposed to be a particularly powerful remedy at certain times at least for certain affections. It is not surprising to find that baby urine was used as an eyewash, for as a rule, it is a very bland fluid of about the same specific gravity as the blood and therefore likely to be soothing to the eyes. Pure water, which is of very different specific gravity from the blood, inevitably produces osmotic disturbances in the conjunctiva. The use of it was not surprising at a time when it was still the custom for physicians to decide whether sugar was present or not in the urine by tasting it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Fauchard, the French father of dentistry, the 200th anniversary of the publication of whose great work was celebrated this year (1923), describes his experiences with one of these deterrent remedies in the treatment of the teeth. His words are all the more striking because Fauchard was extremely conservative. He makes fun of a great many remedies that were said to be good for toothache and was a very careful observer as his description of pyorrhea and his directions for orthodontia make very clear. He said: "I have brought a great deal of relief to a number of persons who had nearly all their teeth carious and who as a consequence were often tormented by pains and aches and mouth troubles, by means of the following remedy. It consists in rinsing out the mouth every morning and also evening before going to bed with some spoonfuls of their own urine just after it has been passed, provided, of course that one is not ailing in any other way than the teeth. The urine should be retained in the mouth for some time and the remedy must be used for a number of days. This

Much more offensive materials, however, were used both internally and externally. I have had a man tell me at the height of an epidemic of diphtheria in the days before antitoxic serum came to deprive that affection of its terrors, that he had saved his two children from the death which came to so many others, when they were attacked during an epidemic, by blowing the dried powdered excrement of the dog into their throats. He said that that was a very common and almost infallible remedy for sore throat in certain parts of Wales. There are certain places in the Balkans where goats are a common possession of the people, where a solution of goat's excrement is said to be excellent for the cure of a cold. A physician who had some experience among these people told me that he thought that somehow the idea of these little black excrementitious balls had become associated in the minds of that neighborhood with licorice and that there was nothing more to the use of this substance than this fancied resemblance to licorice. However that might be, there were some of the people who would tell you very calmly that colds hung on whenever they did not use this remedy and

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remedy is of great service, but it is true that it is not very agreeable, except inasmuch as it brings distinct relief. Some of those for whom I have prescribed this remedy and who have made use of it have assured me that after its employment they were freed from other troubles of various kinds throughout the body to which they had been subject. Most people have some little trouble at the beginning to accustom themselves to it, but what will one not do for relief and for health.”

Fauchard goes on to say that “experience has shown that the urine of healthy persons is very good for relieving the pains of gout and getting rid of obstructions of various kinds throughout the body.” Manifestly the vague pains and aches which occur in connections with joints and muscles and which are so often spoken of as rheumatism or gout had been relieved by this urinary remedy. It seems surprising that it should have cured toothache and so many other discomforts, but then, after what we know of cures, that is what might be expected, for this would be a “cure with a punch,” a suggestion strong enough to neutralize even rather serious unfavorable suggestions.

were broken up almost at once when they took it. As the civilized remedies which are supposed to break up colds are quite undependable enough and almost never produce the effect claimed for them, even though a great many people swear by them, it is not surprising that our friends in the Balkans should be so ready to proclaim the merits of their goat licorice drops.

Crushed vermin of various kinds, particularly the various kinds of lice, have been a favorite cure-all for many of the eruptive and itching diseases. It was a question of *Similia similibus curantur*, like is cured by like, I suppose, but the wonder is how widespread over the earth's surface these prescriptions for crushed vermin were found. They were favorites in China almost more than anywhere else and particularly where there was a large supply of the vermin quite equal to any demand that might be made on it. Itching in any part of the body was said to be relieved by these powdered materials and as itchiness is very largely a matter of mental attention the cures are not surprising. Whenever any one concentrates attention on any part of his body he will note that there is an itchy feeling in it produced by the fact that his clothes are touching him at that point. If he thinks about it the itchiness may become almost intolerable. If he can divert attention from it it will usually disappear. The same thing is true as regards the uncomfortable sensations which prelude the emptying of the bladder. These symptoms, too, were treated by that same remedy. The vermin, as a rule, and particularly the lice are not poisonous in any sense, and it is well known that many of our American Indians acquired the habit of picking the little travelers out of their hair and finding a fine satisfaction in

crushing them under their teeth and then swallowing them.

Powdered vermin, then, would be only a more or less indifferent remedy depending for its influence upon the "punch" that went with it, that is, the disgust and the deterrent feelings which come from the thought of what the remedy is composed.

Other animal products have been used, often it is said, with very decided advantage. I once saw a very intelligent woman smoking dried angleworms in an ordinary clay pipe. The worms were allowed to dry in the sun and then were slightly crushed and by the addition of a little tobacco it became possible to set them on fire and draw in the smoke from them. She was trying the remedy because an old backwoods woman who lived miles away from a dentist had declared that nothing was so effective in curing toothache as this mode of treatment. She cited many cases among the neighbors on Bald Mountain, this was in Pennsylvania, not Kentucky, who had been "cured" in this way. One pipeful was guaranteed to relieve to a very great extent any toothache, and two pipefuls would do away with the worst toothache any one ever had. Even this lady was quite sure that her tooth, which had been bothering her a very great deal, was much better ever since she had the first whiff of this curious mixture.

Of course externally many of the excrements have been employed. The favorite one in all farming countries has been fresh cow dung. Poultices made of it, if gathered while it was still warm were declared to be a potent remedy for the relief of joint and muscle pains of all kinds. The remedy had to be applied directly to the skin and not covered by a cloth, as other poultices



usually are. The slightly aromatic odor, not at all unpleasant, of the substance, made it much more easy to use than might be thought. The appearance of the limb afterwards was, however, enough to produce such revulsions of feelings as might help on the cure. I have seen this material used by quite intelligent people and indeed they declared to me that it was applied under the direction of a reputable physician. One did not mind its use so much on the limbs or muscles of grown persons under ordinary circumstances, but when it was applied to the female breast with the idea that it was a potent galactagogue or producer of milk one was inclined to feel that that was going too far. There are a great many women, however, who have been ready to declare at various times that they owed the abundant milk supply which they had for their infants to the fact that cow dung poultices were applied to their breasts. I need scarcely say that, whatever the effect, it was entirely mental, due to the "punch" of the very deterrent remedy and not at all to any physical effect which it had upon the secreting apparatus of the gland.



## CHAPTER V

### MAGNETS AND SOME WONDERFUL CURES

**T**HE mystery of magnetic iron, ever since its discovery, has always attracted wide attention and had a special appeal to those who had any knowledge of its properties. This substance from a long distance, for it was first found in Magnesia in Asia Minor, whence its name, possessed the power of attracting like bodies to it and made some of them, at least, partake of its own peculiar quality, and when allowed to float free set itself always in the direction of the Pole star. It could scarcely help but make thinking men wonder about it. Many cures were reported from its application and its use, in one way or another, but its reputation waxed and waned. After the diffusion of the knowledge of the magnetic needle of the compass there was a great renewal of interest in magnetic iron and its possible curative power, for it was felt to represent some great force abroad in the universe. It remained for the modern time, however, to exploit it and to set up the possibility that the principle of the magnet applied also to animal forces. Hence the term "animal magnetism," which was for so long popular, and which caused so much discussion and was applied in so many ways to the explanation of the origin and the cure of disease. Indeed it has not gone out yet for good, but constantly bobs up as the supposed scientific basis of all sorts of curative movements.

The story of magnets as direct cures for disease is one of the most diverting chapters in human experience, but also one of the most characteristic. It had a number of interesting ramifications. About the middle of the eighteenth century, just after popular attention had been focused on electrical manifestations by the discoveries of our own Franklin, and after much had been said about the possible curative effects of electricity, a distinguished astronomer at the University of Vienna, Prof. Maximilian Hell, by chance took up the use of magnets for the cure of the chronic ills of mankind. Owing to certain attractions and repulsions in connection with electrical manifestations, some relationship between magnetism and electricity was suspected, and as electricity had just been demonstrated to be lightning, it is not surprising that great hopes were based on the new remedy.

Professor Hell had a servant in the observatory, a faithful fellow and a good worker, who was suffering from one of the painful muscle conditions in the lower part of the back and the upper part of the legs, which made it difficult for him to walk, except in a crippled condition. For months he had been unable to get around as before, had to neglect much of his work, and besides, constantly complained of the pain which he had to endure. Confident that the magnets could do no harm, the professor of astronomy explained to the man that it was very probable that magnetism represented in some way a parallel of vital or nervous energy and that therefore it ought to be a curative of human ills. Indeed he assured him that he thought that magnets represented the one all-important corrective for such nervous and muscle troubles from which he was suffer-

ing. After the explanation, he applied the magnets over the parts where the pain was greatest and found that at once his patient was somewhat relieved. Successive applications did ever more and more good, until the man gradually got better and in the course of a few weeks a disability, which had lasted for months and had been very crippling, disappeared completely. This is exactly the sort of case with pains and aches and disabilities that so often is "cured" by the "cures" that afterwards fail when they are first introduced. To make the lame walk seems surely a very definite demonstration of the power of a remedy to cure and would seem to make it very clear that in the new remedy, which produces such an effect, we must have a wonderful and hitherto unknown agent for the cure of the ills of humanity.

No wonder then that the astronomer felt sure that he was on the track of an important discovery. The servant brought in others suffering in a similar way, for there is a curious fraternal-society-like drawing together of those who have similar ailments. These people, too, were cured. The news spread and before long many of the cripples of the city began to flock to the astronomer for treatment with his magnets. A great many of them were "cured." A great many more were relieved and all of them felt that they had been benefited. Some of the ills proved refractory and sometimes there was a relapse, but these cases of failure were rare compared to the cures. After a while it became evident that patients suffering from other than merely muscular pains and aches or joint troubles could be benefited by the application of magnets. Many diseases that seemed to be situated in the internal

organs were apparently at least relieved and sometimes even serious affections that seemed almost to threaten life were cured by applications of the magnets. After a time, in order to facilitate their appropriate application and to secure the proper circulation of the magnetic fluid throughout the affected organs, the magnets were fashioned in the shape of the various organs. There was a heart-shaped magnet to be applied over the heart, a kidney-shaped magnet for the kidneys and ear-shaped magnets to place just behind the ear, and larger magnets of suitable shapes for application to the lungs and the liver and so on. It is easy to understand the suggestive value that these would have in making people sure that now they were going to be relieved of their ills.

Of course, almost needless to say, magnets have no effect on human tissues; none at all of any kind. That little fact made no difference, however, in the face of the other "facts" of daily occurrence—the "cures" went right on. And it must not be forgotten that the cures were of pains and aches and disabilities, some of them productive of crippings, very concrete physical ailments, not mere vague psychic affections. Presumably such ills must, beyond all doubt, require physical factors to affect them favorably. At various times, magnets have been claimed to have a distinct physical effect on human tissues, but the claim has always been proved a mistake. Mediums have sometimes insisted that when under the influence of spirits they could feel little flames or something resembling streams of heated particles issuing from the magnets. This was supposed to be due to a hypersensitiveness of touch comparatively like the exaltation of sight and

hearing that produced clairvoyance and clairaudience.

When Dr. Luys was making his famous demonstrations on hypnotized patients in Paris some of his subjects declared that they could see flames issuing from the ends of magnets and that to touch them with a magnet made them draw back as if burned. Some of them, I believe, actually showed reddened spots where magnets had been applied. But then Luys was exposed; it was shown that his supposed hypnotic subjects were just working him for an easy living in the hospital and for the tips that interested physicians from distant countries gave them after particularly good demonstrations of their pretended powers. Only spirit mediums saw and felt magnetic activities since then—and they are exposed every week or so and no one pays any attention to their revelations.

There was a very curiously interesting aftermath to the magnet curing incident which rounds out the story very effectively. A good clergyman, Pfarrer Gassner of the little town of Elwangen in South Germany, saw the “cures” that were being worked by the magnets in Vienna, and feeling that this would be a magnificent opportunity to “cure” some of his parishioners of some of their long-standing ills, he had a set of magnets made for himself and brought them home. He proceeded to effect so many “cures” that the little town of Elwangen became an extremely busy place. Patients flocked not only from the neighboring countryside, but even from long distances, and the tale of the “cures” grew from day to day until Pfarrer Gassner came to be looked upon as a veritable benefactor of his kind. Most people felt that there was ever so much more than the magnets, that there was something in his personality which sup-



plemented and complemented the magnetic influence and so brought about the "cures."

After a time, however, the good pastor made an interesting discovery. He used to insist on not applying the magnets until patients had made peace with their consciences and with their God by going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion. In not a few cases he noted, however, that if people did this they did not have to wait for the application of the magnets, but their affections, whatever they were, began to get better at once. This led him to delay the employment of the magnets in a number of cases, and yet he got the same good results. He announced, then, that it was not really the magnets which accomplished the "cure," but that it was the spirit of God himself. He elaborated a theory of disease which is not very different from that which the Christian Scientists hold at the present time. At least it has some striking analogies. He declared that there was no such thing as physical ill, but only spiritual perversion. When spiritual perversion continued for a time, the body also became affected and various pains and aches and symptoms of disease developed. As soon, however, as the spirit was set right then all was well. He taught that there was no such thing as physical evil or disease, but only spiritual ill which manifested itself through the body. To be cured of physical ills, then, the one thing absolutely necessary was to get the spirit in order by Confession and Communion and it would not be long after this before all symptoms of disease would disappear.

Almost needless to say it was not long before the Church had something to say about this very interesting teaching. The idea underlying it was heretical and



besides there were certain practical considerations. Altogether too many cardinals and members of the congregations at Rome were the victims of pains and aches of various kinds, some of which had hung on for years, for them to be ready to look with favor on any teaching which declared that such ills were due entirely to their lack of a proper life of the spirit. It is not surprising then that the good Pfarrer Gassner received a curt, peremptory order to stop any such teaching as that at once and to give up his healings forthwith. This order produced a great deal of local disaffection. People asked why if the good priest was benefiting so many people, as it was perfectly evident that Pfarrer Gassner was, should he be asked to stop his healing. What difference did a little thing like a Church doctrine amount to if only people were being "cured" of long-standing ills? Were not the "cures" themselves a definite demonstration that there must be something in Pfarrer Gassner's contention? Otherwise how would the "cures" take place? Surely he who did the "curing" must understand how it was done. Pfarrer Gassner was, however, a thoroughly obedient ecclesiastic and he refused to go on with the work of healing. A great many people who were quite sure that they would have been "cured" by him if only he had been permitted to go on with his good work, had to go home unrelieved. It was said at one time that it looked as though by a special beneficence of Providence most of the cripples of South Germany were going to be healed through the goodly offices of Pfarrer Gassner, but alas for human hopes, they were disappointed and there was only another incident to add to the many others involving cures that had failed in the history of mankind.

The idea of magnetism being capable of producing wonderful effects upon the human body led to the employment of all sorts of substances that were said to be magnetized or to contain some magnetism. Various receptacles containing iron filings, subjected to the influence of magnets, and arranged in lines representing the lines of magnetic force and then put into some kind of a container with wires running from it, have been used to produce curative results. In spite of exposure after exposure of the absolute nullity of these, as regards electric or magnetic or for that matter any other kind of force, a number of apparatuses of this kind have sold in large quantities at good prices. Indeed some of them are still selling and have a great reputation for healing among their devotees. They produce absolutely no effect of any kind, electrical, or magnetic, but they effect wonderful cures as the testimonials published by their proprietors attest. I have had very intelligent patients, even clergymen and professors in colleges, who have sworn by their efficacy.

At times, ointments and salves have been given the magnetic name, *magnetic*, though without any other reason except that it has a rather strong appeal. I remember that when I was a boy there was a rather famous magnetic ointment which was very popular and was supposed to draw all sorts of evil out of the body when applied. It may be selling yet in the country places for all I know. It had a great sale fifty years ago. My grandmother, with whom it was a panacea for nearly every external ill and for many an internal ill, too, though always applied externally, called it "magnipetic" ointment. To her mind it appealed very much as if it were a combination of magnificent and

potent and magnetic all in one. If a part was burned, the magnetic ointment would draw out the fire which was supposed to have entered into the tissues. If a wound of any kind had been made into which dirt had found its way, then the application of magnetic ointment was supposed to draw out the foreign matter and prepare the way for healing. The ointment was of course only a conventional old-fashioned preparation containing nothing but some harmless soothing materials, but its name magnetic did the work, and it "cured" people of all sorts of ills and was a great resource when anything untoward happened.

Mankind has always been prone to accept the idea that the *materies morbi*, the essential material of disease, can in some way or other be drawn out of the body by external applications. The one reason why for so many years, indeed centuries, poultices were popular in spite of the nuisance of making them and the still greater nuisance of wearing them, was the thorough-going conviction that they drew deleterious matter or diseased material out of the body. There are many preparations that supply the place of the old-fashioned poultices that still enjoy an extensive use and sale, though medical science has shown them to be absolutely inert.

Blisters were very freely used with the same idea of "drawing" disease material out of the body, though now they are only very rarely employed by physicians and with the sole idea of counterirritation and not at all of any drawing power that they possess. Cupping glasses, both the dry cups and the wet cups, the latter employed sometimes with the extraction of a considerable amount of blood, were supposed to exert their

beneficial effect by their "drawing" power. Leeches were used with the same therapeutic purpose. They were eminently successful for headache and the ills of women. They are very rarely employed now, though it is recognized that the application of this little sucking worm had a very strong mental influence and made people quite sure that they must be about to get better since so much of the "bad blood" in them was sucked out in this way. A generation ago scarcely enough leeches could be obtained to supply the demand for them, and now they are almost never used. Two centuries ago a doctor was, in popular language, a leech, and medicine was leechcraft, so much did the use of these little "worms" impress the popular imagination. People forgot the older etymology of the Saxon name leech for physician and thought of the words in terms of the leeches he used.

The drawing power sometimes expressed itself in magnetic plasters of various kinds or in magnetic rubbings. Various substances which exhibited electrical and magnetic phenomena were looked upon as curative because of their inlying magnetic or "drawing" force. For instance, sticks of sealing wax rubbed with a silk handkerchief were often said to be curative of headache in the old days because under these circumstances pieces of paper will be first attracted and then repelled by the sealing wax. It was supposed that people touched a number of times by sealing wax gathered their diseased materials together in some part and then threw them out under the influence of the subsequent touch of the sealing wax. Glass rods rubbed with silk, exhibiting something of the same effect, were said to be efficacious for rubbing over the surface of the body and causing it to

take on a magneto-electric condition during which diseased conditions or material within the body would surely be rejected or at least repelled in some way. The adjective magnetic still continues to express the belief in the power of one human being over another, though the notion behind it has been long since rejected. Healing ideas that once get into the consciousness of mankind almost never get out of it entirely but have renewals of interest from time to time if only, of course, there is a mystery of some kind associated with them.

## CHAPTER VI

### MESMER AND HIS CURES

**W**HEN the distinguished Austrian astronomer, Professor Hell, was occupied in making his many really wonderful "cures" with magnets at Vienna, there was another very interesting and interested witness of his procedures besides Pfarrer Gassner, whose subsequent experiences we have already discussed. This second student of human nature and of curious phenomena was a man whose name has been almost a household word ever since. This was Franz Antoine Mesmer, from whose last name comes the well-known term Mesmerism, which has been the subject of so much investigation and exploitation ever since. Mesmer studied medicine in the great medical school of Vienna shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century at a time when that institution was probably doing the best work of any medical school in Europe. Two great disciples of Boerhaave, who was undoubtedly the most progressive physician of the eighteenth century and who has been not inaptly called the Bata-vian (or Dutch) Hippocrates, were doing excellent work in the Austrian capital. That enlightened patron of learning, the great Empress Maria Theresa, had invited the Dutch physicians, Van Swieten and De Haan, to teach in her capital with the idea of making it a great center of medical education, and she succeeded. Just about the time that Mesmer was making



his studies there, Auenbrugger was perfecting his discovery of the value of percussion and the invention of methods to make use of it, which initiated the revolution in the diagnosis of chest disease to be completed by Laennec in the next generation. These three names would make enduring reputations for any school.

It was at this time when Vienna had undoubtedly the most important medical school in the world, that Mesmer made his studies there and seems to have done very well in them. What is most interesting for us is the title of his thesis for the doctorate, for at that time every candidate had to write a Latin thesis on some special subject. Mesmer's subject was "The Influence of the Stars on Human Constitutions." It may seem surprising to many people that astrology should still have a place in scientific circles as late as the beginning of the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, but it had. In the seventeenth century men like Galileo and Keppler had drawn up horoscopes for those who desired them and Keppler said that he made much more money and made it much more easily that way than in doing serious scientific astronomical work. Astrology still held over. Indeed, it has not gone out entirely yet and Mesmer, who had a flair for anything that might be popular and money-making, made a special study of it and wrote about it. The surprise is that his thesis was accepted, but it was.

**Mesmer and Magnets.**—Mesmer had seen Professor Hell, the astronomer in Vienna, with whom he was brought in rather intimate contact in connection with his studies in astronomy, performing what seemed almost miracles of healing by means of magnets. He very soon realized that electricity was even more

popular and at the moment much more likely to attract attention than even astrology. Accordingly, he watched the cures by magnets and seems to have brought some of them with him to Paris and there made many cures. These attracted attention, but the magnet cures had begun to fail in Vienna and Mesmer looked around for something in the same general line to replace them, so he made what was called a *baquet* or battery. The patients sat around this and were put in contact with the wires. They sat there for some time while the electricity was supposed to flow into them, and then when Mesmer came into the room they were ready for the great demonstration in healing. Soon he was curing his hundreds every week of all manner of ills.

**Personal Magnetism.**—Mesmer had a wonderful power of impressing all who came in contact with him. Every one felt that here was indeed a remarkable man of wonderful powers. Soon people crowded to consult him. His charges were high and it was no use coming unless you had the money. Literally thousands of people who came proclaimed themselves cured and nothing seemed too much to pay for the exercise of this wonderful healing power which gave back health and strength and wholeness of body and mind, lifted up the depressed, calmed the excited, made tumors disappear, cured long-standing chronic ills of all kinds, restored appetite to those who had been long without it, gave renewal of life and vigor to all, and seemed actually to be snatching many from the grave. Any one who doubts this description or thinks it at all exaggerated should read some of the literature that gathered around Mesmer and some of the letters that

were written about him and his cures at that time. Nothing seemed too much to say. He was looked upon as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind that the world has ever seen. Paris fairly went wild over him, it was not the common people, it was the *haute noblesse*, and the well-to-do educated people who were cured. Only those with funds need apply. Mesmer was a benefactor of the race—but always for a *quid pro quo*.

**Mesmer's Secret.**—Frank Podmore, in his *Modern Spiritualism*, has continued Mesmer's story. It has all the earmarks of the usual irregular practitioner and his cure which works wonders on the susceptible and then fails and is lost from sight. Podmore says:

“But if Mesmer found little favor with the wise and prudent, he met with a reception more cordial and much more profitable from the general public. So much attention did his cures—or the rumor of them—excite especially, as it would seem, in the fashionable world, that in March, 1781, the Minister de Maurepas was commissioned by the King to offer him a pension of 20,000 livres, and a further sum of 10,000 livres annually to provide a suitable house, on condition that he would establish a school and communicate the secret of his treatment. Mesmer rejected the terms, ostensibly because he held it beneath his own dignity and the dignity of the great truth which he proclaimed to be a party to such a bargain. But it is not difficult to infer that if the terms, sufficiently liberal as they seem to us, had been commensurate with his appetite, he would have been willing to ‘take the cash and let the credit go.’ For, two years later, in 1783, a subscription was set on foot to which each would-be pupil contributed 100 louis d’or (2,400 livres), and a sum of no less than 340,000 livres (nearly 14,000 pounds sterling), worth \$100,000 of our money at that time,

was handed over to Mesmer. In return he gave a course of lectures on his system. Before admission to these lectures he had required each pupil to sign an undertaking that he would not practice on his own account, nor impart the secret to others without Mesmer's permission. As the price of this permission he subsequently proposed that they should establish centers of magnetic treatment in every town of importance in France, and should hand over to him half of all the fees that they received. His pupils, many of them men of position, who had no desire to practice for money, formed themselves into a *Société de l'Harmonie*, and vindicated their claim to the title by repudiating, after an unseemly squabble, their part of the contract."

**Other Healers.**—How familiar all this seems in the light of certain modern experiences of a similar nature with regard to the selling of therapeutic secrets and the training of students to do healing under the oath of secrecy and all the rest. Mesmer, in fact, attracted so much attention that the Government simply had to investigate his "cure," so the following year the two learned bodies, the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris and the Royal Society of Medicine were asked to appoint commissioners who would look into Mesmer's ways and means of "curing." Some idea of the sincerity of their purpose and their thorough-going determination to make the investigation as scientific as possible may be gathered from the fact that among the commissioners chosen for the investigation were Lavoisier, the great French chemist, "the father of chemistry," as he is sometimes, not undeservedly, called; Baily, scarcely less well known in scientific attainments and temper at that time, and our own Benjamin Frank-

lin, who happened at the moment to be in Paris as the representative of the United States Government. Some five months were spent in the investigation and, at the end of it, the commissioners were unanimous in declaring that there was absolutely nothing physical in any of Mesmer's methods of cure and that his magnetic fluid could not be perceived by any of the senses nor could its existence be inferred from any effects observed either in themselves or in any of the patients examined. They did not say so in so many words, but they evidently felt that it was just a question on Mesmer's part of influencing the minds of his patients.

**The Battery.**—At this time Mesmer had given up the use of the magnets, but he and his disciples were employing for their therapeutic purposes what, as we have said before, they called a *baquet* or battery which was supposed to give electrical or electro-magnetic effects. This battery consisted of a large circular tub filled with bottles, arranged in special manner and covered with water up to a certain height. In the lid of the *baquet* were several holes through each of which passed an iron rod connecting with the bottles and so bent that the patients who sat round the tub could apply one of the rods to any part of their persons. They themselves were either connected together by a wire or by a chain or sometimes they formed a "chain" in themselves by holding hands. A piano from one corner of the room played various rather solemn airs during the time of the cure and sometimes there was singing. Mesmer, when he came into the room, carried an iron rod or wand, some ten or twelve inches long, with which he touched the patients and was supposed to bring to a focus the electrical influences on



them. Some of the patients would faint when touched, some would have an attack of trembling, some would go into a cataleptic condition and some would burst out into hysterical laughter or tears. Very few remained unaffected.

It was this *baquet* or battery that Franklin and the commission with him examined very carefully, and to use a modern expression, they could not discover an ion of electricity in it anywhere nor any magnetic nor any other kind of physical effects. They saw how the patients were affected but they thought that that was likely to do harm rather than good. Indeed, in a confidential report to the Minister of the day they emphasized the danger of the consequences which might result from the spread of these practices and they recommended their legal suppression. Very special arrangements were made to see above all that Franklin, who was held in high honor in France at that time because of his demonstration of the identity of lightning and electricity, should have full opportunity to test the new mode of treatment as thoroughly as possible. Mesmer and D'Eslon were ready to do anything they could and D'Eslon actually went out to Passy where Franklin lived. A tree in the garden was magnetized and then a patient, a boy of twelve years subjected to its influence, was brought into the garden blindfolded. He collapsed in a swoon before he got within twenty feet of the magnetized tree. Franklin was entirely too sensible and too experienced in human nature to think of anything else but mental influence. He could find no trace of anything like magnetization.

**Mesmer Repudiated.**—On the receipt of this report the French Government refused to allow Mesmer to



go on with his work. When this was made known there came near being riots in the streets. The hysteria of the French Revolution was already at work and so the susceptible and suggestive state of the people may readily be imagined. Every one demanded why a great benefactor of mankind should be prevented from accomplishing his healing mission. A great many people were prone to say that the physicians and the scientists were jealous of Mesmer and his wonderful discovery and were so prejudiced that they could not be made to understand his marvelous invention and, above all, the great underlying principle of electrotherapeutics that he was applying. The Government was firm, however, and so Mesmer had to give up his work and retire to England where he lived in ease and comfort to a good round old age, having made a great deal of money, it was said, though there is a tradition that he lost his money toward the end and had to suffer.

His name became attached to the process of Mesmerizing or magnetizing patients, which about the middle of the nineteenth century came to be called hypnotizing. Mesmer himself, however, never made any deliberate studies in hypnotism but seems to have thought sincerely that he was applying some mode of electricity for the cure of mankind. Some of his pupils, noting what happened among the patients and the curious trances into which some of them went, were tempted to begin the study of Mesmerism or hypnotism, hence Mesmer's name in connection with it. It was De Puysegur who first recognized clearly that there was question of a special state of mind and first gave a reasonably scientific description of it. Abbé Faria, the Portuguese,

who had studied in Paris and heard much of Mesmer's work there, investigated hypnotism very successfully and anticipated most of the modern knowledge with regard to it.

*Mesmer himself* is the interesting character. He made his thousands of "cures"; he left his name forever in the history of medicine and of science; and yet he did nothing physical, but only produced a definite change in the attitude of mind of the patients toward themselves. He did exactly what ever so many others have done, though sometimes they thought they were using drugs and sometimes some novel form of electricity and sometimes some curative manipulation and sometimes some mental influence. It is all the same. The important element in the "cures" is not the therapeutic method nor substance but the patient's mind and his susceptibility to suggestion. If he once makes up his mind that he is going to get better, he gets better unless he has one of the incurable diseases. If he has one of these no effect on his mind will "cure" him, but it may relieve him of a whole host of accessory symptoms and thus make him think that he is "cured," or at least so greatly relieved that a marvel of "cure" has been worked on him. Cures follow cures once they start and psychic contagion lends its influence and suggestion, like rumor, gathers force as it runs until disillusion comes.

## CHAPTER VII

### DR. ELISHA PERKINS AND HIS TRACTORS

I THINK that there is no doubt in the minds of those who know the details of it that the most amusing series of incidents in the history of medicine in America are those connected with the story of Dr. Elisha Perkins of Norwich, Connecticut, and his famous metallic tractors. Connecticut was, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, looked upon very generally throughout the country as the home of the typical Yankee, the shrewd bargainer and barterer of our early history. It was known outside its own borders as "the wooden nutmeg state" in allusion to its alleged manufacture of nutmegs out of the State forests for sale in world commerce as nutmegs—at spice prices. Of course it is well understood now that the State deserved no such dubious reputation and that its people were characteristic Yankees deserving of the respect and esteem of all the rest of the country. It was after one of the State's earliest governors, Jonathan Trumbull, a great friend of the French ambassador to this country during the Revolution, that the Yankee was given the literary pseudonym of Brother Jonathan, the representative of all that was best in American character. It must be confessed, however, that there were some unfortunate developments in the early days which tended to create certain false impressions in the minds of the jealous

citizens of neighboring states. Among these the career of Dr. Perkins was one of the most striking.

Dr. James Thacher, in his *American Medical Biography, or Memoirs of Eminent Physicians Who Have Flourished in America* (Boston, 1828), has preserved for us this story of Dr. Perkins' life in some detail. Dr. Thacher is our authority in American medical biography. It is well known that like modern medical biographers he turned to physicians themselves, or to their near relatives for the important data relating to the physicians whose lives he presented. We can be quite sure, then, of finding authentic biographical materials in his work. Dr. Perkins was the son of a physician who, after graduation at Yale, practiced in Norwich, Connecticut, for many years. The son, Dr. Elisha Perkins, the inventor of the famous tractors, was also a graduate of Yale. So far as we know anything about him, he was a very worthy scion of old Eli with many qualities that commended themselves to his contemporaries. He was a forward-looking man of an inquiring mind, who liked to exploit new ideas and who could talk well in support of any theories that he had. In general, he was a model professional physician. His son wrote of him in the biographical material furnished Dr. Thacher: "Dr. Perkins seemed ever to search for something new in every sphere which could better the condition of the human family." He was ready and anxious to do anything and everything to bring about advance in medicine for the benefit of his patients as well as the profession.

He had given many demonstrations of his unselfish devotion to his profession during the course of his years of active practice. He was a powerful man, over six

feet high, well-formed and he frequently rode sixty miles a day, almost entirely on horseback, in making his professional calls. It is noted particularly in the sketch of him—thanks to Dr. Thacher's interest in biography—that quite contrary to the usual custom of the medical profession in his time, he accomplished all this hard travel "without the aid of artificial stimulants, never making use of ardent spirits." In his day, it need scarcely be said, that Jamaica rum, Medford rum and other well-known extremely strong liquors were, in spite of the prevalent prejudice against them in the same region at the present day, very commonly consumed all over New England, especially near the coast. They could be obtained practically for what we would consider next to nothing a gallon. Even clergymen and deacons in the church put in a good stock of rum each winter quite as they did of wood for fires. It is not surprising, then, that physicians did likewise, sometimes to the immense detriment of their patients. Dr. Perkins was not one of these, however. To be sure that he would provide the best of counsel for his patients he abjured rum absolutely and nothing shows better his intense sense of professional duty.

A characteristic story is told of him that when he was tired out he would occasionally, in the midst of his long rounds of professional visits, ask the household, where his patient was, to permit him to lie down for a short sleep. He would then throw himself on a bed or couch, handing his watch to some one in the household, and give orders to be waked in five minutes precisely. This he maintained was quite sufficient to provide him a thorough rest for even the hardest professional duties for the next three or four hours. Taking snatches of

sleep this way on his rounds, he found that he required but three or four hours' sleep in the night, even for many weeks in succession, though subjected to great fatigue. These were the heroic days of medical practice when physicians nearly every year had to risk their lives in attending patients suffering from severe epidemic diseases and it is to their credit to say quite simply that they did their duty in this matter with utter unselfishness. Cholera and typhus and even yellow fever found their way into the United States at this time, yellow fever invading even the seaports of the north, and made serious ravages on the population. Physicians risked their lives and health responding to the calls made upon them for long distance travel in the fulfillment of their professional duties.

A very interesting hint of Dr. Perkins' own amenableness to suggestion is to be found in the story that has come down to us that, if on these occasions when he asked permission to lie down he were allowed to sleep for more than five minutes, he would know at once by his feelings on awakening that the time had been exceeded. Whenever his sleep was permitted to go on for six minutes he would invariably say that he felt the worse for it. It is easy to understand, however, how deeply such a man would impress himself upon his patients and how ready they would be to accept any new ideas which he presented to them. They knew his sincere good-heartedness and unselfish readiness to help them in their ailments so they trusted him absolutely and deservedly. What was more, they felt that he was a forward-looking man who would not be satisfied with what was already known in medicine but would want to go on and make further discoveries, not



so much for the sake of any advantage that might accrue to himself personally from his discovery, as for the benefit that he would thus be enabled to confer on humanity.

The stage was all set for a demonstration of personal healing and the time was ripe for another exhibition of wonderful curative power consequent upon the personal influence of the healer. Almost needless to say what might have been anticipated came to be an actuality. Elisha Perkins made an invention that he seems sincerely to have felt would cure the chronic ills of mankind and of course, with the confidence of the people in him, those cures proceeded to occur.

In 1796, Dr. Perkins thought that he had observed some wonderful effects in the relief of obstinate long-standing cases from the touch of certain metals to the affected parts. He seems to have experimented for some time and finally invented what he called a pair of tractors. These consisted of two short metallic rods made of a number of metals fused together which, when placed in contact with each other and drawn over the skin surface of a patient suffering from almost any ailment, produced a very curiously interesting effect, always in Dr. Perkins' experience, in the direction of cure. He had evidently been brought to making his experiments and observations as the result of the attention which had been attracted by Galvani's discovery that frogs' legs would twitch violently if touched by two pieces of different metals in contact in the presence of an electrical machine. The world was all agog about electricity about that time. Franklin's demonstration, that the tiny electrical phenomena of the laboratory toys of that time which had been considered so trivial

were the same essentially as lightning, had been made only in the preceding generation and had made people realize that evidently a great new phase of our knowledge of natural energy was opening up. Volta was already beginning his work which was to give the world the Voltaic pile, the first continuous source of electricity ever made, and there had been a controversy as to whether electricity might not represent some form of nerve force in the animal body or at least be closely related to it.

No wonder that under the circumstances, with all these recently-discovered wonders of electricity in the air, people were ready to accept Dr. Perkins' tractors, as a possible great curative measure. His personal character and the nascent interest in electrical phenomena and the possibility of a new supreme development of therapeutics from this source of genuine natural healing power made everybody susceptible to strong suggestions in this regard. The tractors were made of a number of different kinds of metals, fused together, even with a little gold in them, according to the specifications of the English patent office, which required the disclosure of the secret of their composition when Dr. Perkins' son took out an English patent. They were about the thickness of lead pencils tapering to a rather blunt point, and four or five inches long. The process of healing by them was called "tractoration" and there was a verb "to tractorate" and also the passive "to be tractorated" in use and while at the beginning the tractors were supposed to be employed by a physician or at least by some one who understood their use, after a while they were sold rather freely to any who desired to purchase them. They were supplied

free to the clergy and at five pounds, that is, half price, to other professional men, and ten pounds to the general public. When it is recalled that money was worth at least three to five times as much in purchasing power then as it is now and was correspondingly scarce and hard to get, it will be readily understood that people were evidently willing to pay well for this new curative agent.

That is not surprising, however, once it is realized what wonderful cures were effected by them. They were of the greatest service in all painful conditions. "Pains in the head, face, teeth, breast, side, stomach, back, rheumatism and all joint and muscle pains," according to Dr. Perkins' own catalogue of pains, could confidently be cured by his wonderful discovery because he had seen actual cases of these disorders invariably cured by it. The metallic tractors, as they were called, attracted attention at first particularly, by curing some older people who had for months or sometimes years been walking lame or in a stooped position and with manifest discomfort, but who after a few séances with the tractors proclaimed themselves entirely cured and then proceeded to walk straight and erect in demonstration of their cure. The tractors had to be drawn downward in effecting the cures, always downward, for some twenty minutes. It was extremely important not to draw them upward or the affection might be aggravated. The tractoration was to be repeated day after day until a cure was effected, but there were some people of delicate nervous mechanism who could not stand the stimulation of so powerful an electrical source of energy and for them there must be at least two days' interval and sometimes even longer. It was especially among

the latter that it was important not to stroke upward at all, for the good that had been accomplished for days might be undone in a few minutes or even by a few strokes if this should happen. It is easy to understand that, when he was securing results such as these must have been, Perkins was dealing with some very susceptible and suggestible people.

There was no doubt at all, however, about the effectiveness of the tractoration when properly employed. Literally thousands of people suffering from chronic disease were improved by it. There were some skeptics, however. Scientists scoffed at the supposed new discovery. His brother members of the medical profession declared, after due investigation, that Dr. Perkins' tractors had no physical efficacy of any kind and that his "cures" were merely due to the influence produced on patients' minds. Of course the patients themselves refused to credit anything like that. Had they not had the pains and the disabilities for years and were they not now "cured"? Could anybody think that they were so foolish as to have made themselves miserable for years only to be "cured" at the end by having a change made in their mental attitude toward themselves? Of course they proclaimed with loud voice that their "cure" was due to the hitherto unknown power of the wonderful new discovery made by Dr. Perkins. They declared him a supreme genius capable of conquering the hitherto unknown, and that his brother physicians were jealous of him and were afraid that they would lose most of their practice if Dr. Perkins continued to cure so many of the patients suffering from chronic ills who had been such a regular source of their revenue year in and year out up to this time. Had not

many of the patients been around to many physicians without being benefited until Perkins' marvelous discovery had given them relief? What could possibly be clearer than that a great new active factor in medicine was at work?<sup>1</sup>

For some years the tractors continued to attract attention in this country and then just at the beginning of the glorious nineteenth century found their way to Europe. A member of the devoted female sex who had herself been cured of a long standing ill or series of ills—the wife of Major Oxholm, a Dane who had been in this country on diplomatic service—brought them back with her to Denmark. Her idea was to have her fellow countrymen and women share in the wonderful American discovery. She moved in high society in Denmark so the Danes fell for the tractors. Why they were fated to be the victims of Dr. Perkins' tractors and Dr. Cook's discovery of the North Pole at a century interval is not clear, but the facts are interesting. The tractors

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes tells us that among other dangers through which his childhood had to run in the old days was also the application of the tractors. He is a little surprised that he survived so successfully and of course lived on to be past fourscore years, but he has no idea that the tractors had anything to do with this. Doubtless his mother or certainly some one in the family had the feeling that a great deal of good was accomplished in his case by the application of the tractors. One thing is perfectly sure, they did no harm. There was absolutely no form of energy in them. He might just as well have been stroked with a pair of spoons that were placed in contact at their bowl ends while the handles were gently moved up and down on his skin. And yet this remedy sold at a high price to thousands of canny Yankees, who did not part with good honest United States money unless they thought they were getting full value for it, but who were absolutely assured because of the number of "cures" reported that they were buying a wonderful treasure. They doubtless wondered, like Omar Khayyám, how the sellers, as of the wine of Persia, could buy anything half so valuable as the "cure" they sold. Dear old Oliver Wendell could look back from his threescore years and ten in supreme amusement over the tractors, but they were a very serious thing when bought to help him through the perils of childhood.



soon became the ruling passion. The workmen could not manufacture them fast enough. Philanthropic women carried them with them to the homes of the poor and cured sufferers of long standing ills. Distinguished members of parliament and of the Supreme Court proclaimed their "cure" by this marvelous agent and there seemed to be no end to its power to relieve disease. Even physicians and surgeons experimented with the tractors and reported results deemed sufficiently important for publication in a large volume.

Other European countries, however, were not to be left without the benefit of this marvelous therapeutic agent. The volume on the tractors was translated into English by Prof. Kampfmueller and into German by Prof. Tode, Physician to the King of Denmark. The metallic tractors proved eminently curative in both countries. The tractors literally worked wonders. The nobility particularly were cured of long standing ills and what could the poorer classes do but follow suit? It was felt that a great new sun of healing had arisen for mankind.

England capped the climax by socializing the new movement. It was considered wrong that the benefits of this new dispensation should be confined to the well-to-do. They must be disseminated to all classes. Accordingly the Perkinian Institution, as it was called, was founded by public subscriptions obtained from those who had been benefited by the use of the tractors so that the poor, too, might have their chance for "cure." The Right Honorable Lord Rivers was President and Sir William Barker Vice-President of this institution and it received a better endowment than any hospital in



London possessed at that time. In a pamphlet on the *Perkinean Institution* (London, 1804), it is stated that the communications of cured cases are from disinterested and intelligent characters from almost every quarter of Great Britain. There were no less than eight professors in four different universities, twenty-one regular physicians and nineteen surgeons and thirty clergymen, twelve of whom were doctors of divinity, among those bearing testimony to the efficacy of the new cure.

Perkins' son, who had charge of the Perkinean movement in England, declared that the cases published amounted at the end of three years to about 5,000. As he considers that not more than one cure in three hundred which the tractors had performed was published and thinks that the proportion is probably much smaller "it will be seen that the number to this time has exceeded 1,500,000." In answer to the objection that the cure was effected merely through the influence of the patient's imagination, the promoters of the Perkinean Institution asserted that multitudes of cures were performed on infants and even on animals, where of course such influence could not be presumed to exist. Horses were very often cured, it was said, of many different kinds of ailments by this wonderful new agent and as the horse was in high estimation in England it is easy to understand how much this added to the value of the advertising. Many lady patients, whose own ills had disappeared under the benign beneficence of the great Dr. Perkins' discovery, applied the tractors also to their pet dogs with reported almost astounding results of cure. The veterinarian for dogs had not yet become an institution so that it is easy to understand what a precious resource this new mode of treatment was and

how much the results added to the prestige of the American inventor.

Finally the English physicians hit upon a very practical common-sense mode of demonstrating the utter inutility of the metallic tractors in making the cures which were giving them such a vogue. Some of them made pairs of tractors out of wood, but colored them exactly like the original, genuine tractors, and then using them in the same way as recommended by the inventor and his son, they proceeded to effect a series of striking cures. When these facts came to be known it was a great shock to everybody and it led to a great fall of confidence in the tractors. Of course if they had any reason for active curative effects it was contained in the metals of which they were composed, which were supposed, by contact, to produce or at least foster in some way electrical effects, which proved curative. It was the interest in electricity and magnetism, just then at its height, owing to Franklin's, Galvani's and Volta's discoveries, that made every one so ready to accept the tractors as possibly possessed of marvelous power. If painted pieces of wood, as had been shown, would accomplish the same results—indeed one English doctor had used a pair of old tobacco pipes under the guise of tractors and had cured people—then electricity was out of the question and there was no impressive factor to work upon the mind and so tractoration faded out of existence.

Now after a century we can look back upon this whole question of the metallic tractors and their efficacy in the healing of disease with quite unprejudiced minds. Some of the tractors may still be seen in our museums. The surprise is how few of them are left, considering the

large number of them that were sold. Manifestly the disillusioned tried to hide even from themselves the evidence of their one-time delusion. By 1810, the tractors were utterly discredited and in the following decade when Thacher compiled his sketch of Perkins he said, "It is to be considered a singular and unaccountable circumstance that the remedy should have been consigned to oblivion." He can scarcely understand how it is so. He recalls how much of attention the new mode of treatment secured and how many, many cures were declared to have been made by it and yet here it is after a scant twenty years completely sunk into innocuous desuetude. Manifestly he does not know quite what to make of it, for he asks, with some considerable show, of scarcely being able to believe it possible himself, the startling question, "Is it within the bounds of probability that the vast amount of authenticated evidence which was produced in favor of the tractors and their marvelous power to heal the ills of mankind should be resolved into a delusion, a mere phantom of the imagination?"

No wonder when a physician, with the evidence before him only a dozen years later, scarcely knew what to think of the rise and fall of Perkinism or tractoration, that the ordinary person, unused to things medical, finds it difficult to understand it. Literally thousands of intelligent people, many of them were educated, not a few of them members of the professions, graduates of universities, a great many of them well-to-do and supposedly not likely to lend themselves readily to self-delusion, proclaimed that they had been "cured" by these new wonderful instruments. Surely they must know what they were talking about and if their evidence cannot be

accepted what sort of evidence can there possibly be for the introducing of a new remedy? Only one thing is perfectly sure: that no number of announced cures ought ever to be taken as evidence to the value of a new remedy or mode of treatment. What is all-important is to know exactly what the patients are suffering from and then to know what possible connection the new remedy or mode of treatment may have with their affection. Glittering generalities founded on theory, instruments invented on the strength of hypotheses, discoveries supposed to be based on the latest current interests of science with an appeal to susceptible people, all these represent candidates for the lumber room of the cures that have failed and like Perkins' tractors come and go in the history of ailing humanity.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ABSENT TREATMENT; DISTANCE CURES

**T**HERE was an old aphorism very commonly accepted by the medieval philosophers which has often been repeated in modern times. It ran in the old Latin *actio in distans repugnat*. Literally translated it means action at a distance is absurd, that is to say the exertion of the influence of one thing upon another, if they *stand apart* and are not connected by some medium or other, is impossible. The sun acts on the earth through the medium of the ether, by what we call gravitation. I suppose that as good an illustration as any of the meaning of the aphorism would be that a remedy or mode of treatment cannot be expected to do an ailing individual good unless it is brought in actual contact in some way or other with his person. Without this, how can it affect him? In spite of this very simple maxim of what would surely seem to be the very commonest of common sense, we have had any number of "cures" and remedies which have produced their effects, all of them that are reported very favorable, even at a considerable distance from the individual who was benefited. Distance seemed to have no power of limiting their possibility and potency for good and the result of their use even miles away from the patient has been in very many reported cases really striking "cures," some of them approaching the marvelous. And, as always with "cures," above all were the pains and aches, nay

even the wounds, of men cured,—those ills that are so surely physical and concrete that they cannot by any possibility be thought merely imaginary or purely mental in character, but must be the result of physical disturbance of the body which can only be cured by physical activity of some kind or other.

Some of the modern healers of various kinds and cults emphasize their power to “cure” by absent treatment, but they must not think that they are the only pebbles on this beach of distance healing. The woods are full of successful absent healers, and “cures” by distance treatment are so common in the past as to be found in every chapter of irregular medical history. The absent treaters have a lot of company. The interesting thing for us is that, in spite of the distance between them and the remedy or the source of curative energy, so many people proceeded to get well. They got well of all sorts of things, at least they were sure they had all sorts of things, and sometimes their personal diagnoses of their cases had been confirmed by men whom they thought were authorities on the subject. The consciousness that they are being treated from a distance will cure a great many people. They get a change of attitude of mind and then proceed to get better.

**The Weapon Ointment.**—The most typical example in history is undoubtedly the famous weapon ointment, or as it was known in the Latin of the time the *Unguentum Armarium*. Oliver Wendell Holmes in the first one of his *Medical Essays* (Boston, 1861) has given a rather detailed account of this wonderful remedy as an illustration of the tendency of men to be “cured” by anything provided their belief in the possibility of its “curing” them is once aroused. He also cites its history



as "one of the most curious examples of the fallacy of popular belief and the uncertainty of asserted facts in medical experience." He has probably boiled down most of the essential details of the story better than any one else could do it and besides he has put the case with regard to it very forcibly. The surprising fact with regard to the weapon ointment is Lord Bacon's acceptance of its power to cure, because he was sure that he had seen enough of its results to make it clear that here was a very wonderful discovery. Some of my readers may need to be reminded, though of course most of them will not, that Lord Bacon is commonly considered the founder of inductive philosophy and is sometimes spoken of as the father of modern science. He devoted himself very faithfully to experiment and observation and he laid down the principles on which the development of science by these means could be surely brought about. In spite of that, however, he was quite as capable himself of being carried away in a matter of this kind as any one else. His logic was all right but the facts were all wrong. It must not be forgotten that facts are not truths, in spite of the prevalent impression in the matter, unless you have all the facts. When some of the facts are missing it is perfectly possible to draw conclusions far wide of the truth.

This weapon ointment becomes more and more wonderful the more we know of it. Some of the most distinguished men of the period in Europe had absolute confidence in the healing power of the weapon ointment. Of course they called it by its Latin name of *Unguentum Armarium*, which gave it a high suggestive value. This is all the more surprising because of the utter lack of anything like probability with regard to its having any

favorable effect. For the ointment was prepared very carefully, from ingredients that came from long distances, or had been very difficult to secure, and which had to be obtained as a rule under very special circumstances so that the conditions for its preparation were extremely difficult to fulfill with absolute certainty. *Once it was compounded it was applied not to the wound, but to the weapon which made the wound.* As far as possible, to be absolutely sure of cure the weapon should be obtained while the blood from the wound was still on it, though it could be efficacious also without that and indeed whenever the actual weapon could not be obtained, an application of the weapon ointment to a wooden image of the original weapon was known to be very efficacious. The great feature, however, of this wonderful remedy which effected so many cures that intellectual Europe in the most civilized countries was all agog about it, was exactly that action at a distance which philosophers at all times have felt to be quite absurd.

Fabricius Hildanus, of whom Oliver Wendell Holmes makes mention, because of his acceptance of the efficaciousness of the weapon ointment, was one of the leading surgeons of Germany in the early seventeenth century. A statue has recently been unveiled to him in his native city of Düsseldorf and he is usually hailed by the title of "Father of German surgery." He must not be thought of as an ignorant barber surgeon, for as noted by Garrison in his *History of Medicine*, he had a good classical education and while strongly conservative in theory, supporting the views of the ancients, he was in practice a bold and skillful operator, inventing many new instruments. His most important work, *A*

*Century of Surgical Cases*, is the best collection of case records of the time. Some idea of his progressiveness will be appreciated from the fact that he extracted an iron splinter from the eye with a magnet, explored the auditory canal with a speculum of his own invention, and devised the first field chest of drugs for use in military medicine, thus introducing the idea of "first aid" into military surgery. He lived at a time when the wars of the seventeenth century gave abundant opportunities for the practice of surgery. Europe was aflame with the famous Thirty Years' War all during the first half of this century down to the Peace of Westphalia, in 1648.

In spite of all this practical experience, Fabricius or Hildanus, as he is variously called from the habit of Latinizing names, which they had at that time, or Fabry von Hildan, which is the German form of his name, was a great believer in the weapon ointment or salve and was quite sure that he had seen it make wonderful cures. The reason is not hard to understand. There are a very large number of wounds, those of the abdomen, the lungs and the head on which he did not dare operate. The only thing he could do was wait and see what nature might accomplish with them. Now nature is a wonderful physician and often works miracles of healing, but patients and their physicians are impatient about merely standing by and waiting for nature to do it, and so they make applications of many kinds, most of which do harm rather than good, and then when nature effects the cure they attribute it to the applications that they have made. So it was with the weapon ointment, only it had the advantage, because of its application to the weapon not the wound, of at least doing no harm by introducing septic materials into the wound. And so

Fabry of Hildan and Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England, fell for it. But let Oliver Wendell Holmes tell the story:

“Fabricius Hildanus, whose name is familiar to every surgical scholar, and Lord Bacon, who frequently dipped a little into medicine, are my principal authorities for the few circumstances I shall mention regarding it. The weapon ointment was a preparation used for the healing of wounds, but instead of its being applied to them, the injured part was washed and bandaged, and the weapon with which the wound was inflicted was carefully anointed with the unguent. Empirics, ignorant barbers, and men of that sort, are said to have especially employed it. Still there were not wanting some among the more respectable members of the medical profession who supported its claims. The composition of this ointment was complicated, in the different formulæ given by different authorities; but some substances addressed to the imagination, rather than the wound or weapon, entered into all. Such were portions of mummy, of human blood, and of moss from the skull of a thief hung in chains.

“Hildanus was a wise and learned man, one of the best surgeons of his time. He was fully aware that a part of the real secret of the *Unguentum Armarium* consisted in the washing and bandaging the wound and then letting it alone. But he could not resist the solemn assertions respecting its efficacy; he gave way before the outcry of *facts*, and therefore, instead of denying all their pretensions, he admitted and tried to account for them upon supernatural grounds. As the virtue of those applications, he says, which are made to the weapon, cannot reach the wound, and as they can produce no effect without contact, it follows, of necessity, that the Devil must have a hand in the business; and as he is by far the most long-headed and experienced of practitioners, he cannot find this a matter of any

great difficulty. Hildanus himself reports, in detail, the case of a lady who had received a moderate wound, for which the *Unguentum Armarium* was employed without the slightest use. Yet instead of receiving this flat case of failure as any evidence against the remedy, he accounts for its not succeeding by the devout character of the lady, and her freedom from that superstitious and over-imaginative tendency which the Devil requires in those who are to be benefited by his devices.

“Lord Bacon speaks of the weapon ointment, in his *Natural History*, as having in its favor the testimony of men of credit, though, in his own language, he himself ‘as yet is not fully inclined to believe it.’ His remarks upon the asserted facts respecting it show a mixture of wise suspicion and partial belief. He does not like the precise directions given as to the circumstances under which the animals from which some of the materials were obtained were to be killed; for he thought it looked like a provision for an excuse in case of failure, by laying the fault to the omission of some of these circumstances. But he likes well that ‘they do not observe the confecting of the Ointment under any certain *constellation*; which is commonly the excuse of *magical medicines*, when they fail, that they were not made under a fit figure of heaven.’ It was pretended that if the offending weapon could not be had, it would serve the purpose to anoint a wooden one made like it. ‘This,’ says Bacon, ‘I should doubt to be a device to keep this strange form of cure in request and use; because many times you cannot come by the weapon itself.’ And in closing his remarks on the statements of the advocates of the ointment, he says, ‘Lastly, it will cure a beast as well as man, which I like best of all the rest, because it subjecteth the matter to an easy trial.’ It is worth remembering, that more than two hundred years ago, when an absurd and fantastic remedy was asserted to possess wonderful power, and when sensible persons ascribed its pretended influence to imagination, it was boldly answered that the cure took



place when the wounded party did not know of the application made to the weapon, and even when a brute animal was the subject of the experiment, and that this assertion, lie as we all know it was, came in such a shape as to shake the incredulity of the keenest thinker of his time."

**The Sympathetic Powder.**—Surely the least that could be expected would be that after the delusion of the weapon ointment there would be no more of these distance cures that would be accepted for at least a century, and yet the very next generation in England, though also to a notable extent on the continent, not only coquetted with, but actually accepted very ardently, among the better classes at least, a remedy similar in its mode of application. This was what is known as the sympathetic powder. Indeed Oliver Wendell Holmes goes so far as to say that the sympathetic powder was more famous than the weapon ointment and was probably more used because it was ever so much easier to prepare and one could be surer of having it in the form in which it would be most efficacious, though there was even a loophole of doubt with regard to this. Of course as regards the weapon ointment, the ingredients recommended—mummy, and the moss scraped from the condemned man's skull and mandrake—dug, I believe, out of a graveyard in the dark of the moon—and other substances rather difficult to secure in the state required, made it easy to attribute failure to the fact that the ointment had not been prepared properly. There was very little to this in the case of the sympathetic powder, though, as Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes suggests, the trituration and crystallization process



might be invoked as a loophole of excuse if failure occurred.

Dr. Holmes' account of the sympathetic powder is even more humorously interesting, it seems to me, than that of the weapon ointment. The story of the powder has many of the elements that have entered into the historical details of other curative materials that came from a distance: It was brought by a missionary from the East; it had been discovered there in that realm of command of mysterious powers; it was held a secret until somebody of great benevolence succeeded in penetrating the mystery in some way and then proceeded to diffuse the knowledge of it for the benefit of mankind. Every one on whom it was used could feel that if he was benefited it was just another example of how the wonderful powers of nature when discovered, or still more often revealed through divine goodness to man, can be used to cure the ills of mankind and allay their pains and relieve their serious conditions and give them back wonderfully to health and strength when any such fortunate termination of their condition seemed to have been quite out of the question. Sir Kenelm Digby, the sponsor for the sympathetic powder in England, is almost as important a character in the mid-seventeenth century in England, as Sir Francis Bacon was at the beginning, and the sympathetic powder was taken up by physicians as the weapon ointment had been taken up by surgeons. Humanity does not change. Dr. Holmes said of it:

"This powder was said to have the faculty, if applied to the blood-stained garments of a wounded person, to cure his injuries, even though he were at a great distance at the time. A friar, returning from the East, brought the recipe to Europe somewhat before the middle of

the seventeenth century. The Grand Duke of Florence, in which city the friar was residing, heard of his cures, and tried, but without success, to obtain his secret. Sir Kenelm Digby, an Englishman well known to fame, was fortunate enough to do him a favor, which wrought upon his feelings and induced him to impart to his benefactor the composition of his extraordinary powder. This English knight was at different periods of his life an admiral, a theologian, a critic, a metaphysician, a politician, and a disciple of Alchemy. As is not unfrequent with versatile and inflammable people, he caught fire at the spark of a new medical discovery, and no sooner got home to England than he began to spread the conflagration.

“An opportunity soon offered itself to try the powers of the famous powder. Mr. J. Howell, having been wounded in endeavoring to part two of his friends who were fighting a duel, submitted himself to a trial of the sympathetic powder. Four days after he received his wounds, Sir Kenelm dipped one of Mr. Howell’s garters in a solution of the powder, and immediately, it is said, the wounds, which were very painful, grew easy, although the patient, who was conversing in a corner of the chamber, had not the least idea of what was doing with his garter. He then returned to his home, leaving his garter in the hands of Sir Kenelm, who had hung it up to dry, when Mr. Howell sent his servant in a great hurry to tell him that his wounds were paining him horribly; *the garter was therefore replaced in the solution of the powder*, AND THE PATIENT GOT WELL AFTER FIVE OR SIX DAYS OF ITS CONTINUED IMMERSION.

“King James I, his son Charles I, the Duke of Buckingham, then prime minister, and all the principal personages of the time, were cognizant of this fact; and James himself, being curious to know the secret of this remedy, asked it of Sir Kenelm, who revealed it to him, and his Majesty had the opportunity of making several

trials of its efficacy, which all succeeded in a surprising manner.

“The king’s physician, Dr. Mayerne, was made master of the secret, which he carried to France and communicated to the Duke of Mayenne, who performed many cures by means of it, and taught it to his surgeon, who after the Duke’s death, sold it to many distinguished persons, by whose agency it soon ceased to be a secret. What was this wonderful substance which so astonished kings, princes, dukes, knights, and doctors? Nothing but powdered blue vitriol. But it was made to undergo several processes that conferred on it extraordinary virtues. Twice or thrice it was to be dissolved, filtered, and crystallized. The crystals were to be laid in the sun during the months of June, July, and August, taking care to turn them carefully that all should be exposed. Then they were to be powdered, trituated, and again exposed to the sun, again reduced to a very fine powder, and secured in a vessel, while hot, from the sunshine. If there seem anything remarkable in the fact of such astonishing properties being developed by this process, it must be from our shortsightedness, for common salt and charcoal develop powers quite as marvelous after a certain number of thumps, stirs, and shakes, from the hands of modern workers of miracles. In fact the *Unguentum Armarium* and sympathetic powder resemble some more recent prescriptions; the latter consisting in an infinite dilution of the common dose in which remedies are given, and the two former in an infinite dilution of the common distance at which they are applied.”

**Horse Chestnuts for Rheumatics.**—These stories of the weapon ointment and the sympathetic powder always remind me of an incident in my own early life to which my memory has clung while many another more important event has been allowed to slip away. I had

a dear old aunt to whom I used to go whenever I wanted anything. One day she was emptying her pocket, one of these great capacious pockets that old aunts used to carry in order to be able to supply the wants of their young nephews. She had taken out some string, a large old-fashioned handkerchief, a return ticket or two on the railroad, being kept for some occasion when they might be used, a large spectacle case, her keys, some bills and receipts and a few other such things. Finally there came a couple of horse chestnuts. I saw that her pocket was loaded down already so I asked her why she carried those. She said, "Well you know I suffer from rheumatism sometimes and I have heard that carrying a horse chestnut in the pocket is good for it. Do you know," she added, "I think I am better of my rheumatism ever since I carried the horse chestnut." "But," I asked with youthful insistence, "why two horse chestnuts when the promise is that one will do good?" "Well," she said, "Squire" (that was her husband), "you know, suffers from rheumatism, even more than I do, but I can't get Squire to carry his, so I carry it for him and I know that he has suffered much less from his rheumatism ever since I have carried it." Here was a case of distant treatment successfully accomplished, yet not distant for the medium in the case was affection.

**Drawing Out Nails and Headaches.**—There were a great many such illustrations of distant treatment in connection with plants and particularly trees. There was, for instance, a well-known form of headache called *clavus* or "nail" because the pain of it resembled so much the driving a nail into the forehead or something of that kind. The great cure for that in the old times was the

driving of a series of nails into an oak tree or some other very hard wood where it would be quite difficult to extract them and then drawing them out at intervals to correspond with the intervals at which the headache returned until when the last one was pulled out, the headache was supposed to be gone forever. It is surprising how popular this remedy was and how many people claimed to have been benefited by it. Once more, as with regard to all of these marvelous cures, it was not the ignorant, not even the half educated who represented the largest number of those deluded by the mode of treatment, but on the contrary those who were reasonably well educated and above all those who thought themselves very well informed. But let no one who presumes to discuss and especially to pooh-pooh this old-fashioned remedy, forget that the reason why it was long in vogue was because of the "cures," well authenticated "cures," that it made.

The favorite form of explanation for all of these cures at a distance was that there was some mode or phase of magnetism which brought about the releasing of the curative power. The magnet was known to act over a distance and therefore animal magnetism was supposed to have something of a similar effect. With regard to the weapon ointment, for instance, the blood, which according to many old theories of life was the very life of the body to which the soul was directly attached, would also contain the quintessence of the animal magnetism of the body. Somehow when the blood was shed, some of this animal magnetism disappeared in connection with the blood and when the weapon ointment was applied to the blood, still on a weapon, it released this and it went back to its original possessor



to add to his store of vitality and bring about the healing of the wound. Something of the same kind was supposed to be the curative factor when the sympathetic powder was successfully employed. It is curiously interesting, though it gets rather tiresome after a while, to read these labored theories and elaborate explanations of how these cures were effected. By using scientific words supposed to have an esoteric meaning and keeping persistently at it, very wonderful explanations were evolved which manifestly proved very impressive for a large number of people.

The one thing that is all-important for us here is the fact that people were cured, cured, cured by these means. And the people who were "cured" were not the ignorant and not those supposed to be especially susceptible to suggestion or mental influence, but very often well-educated, or at least well-informed people, and the "cures" were so many as to bring conviction of the efficaciousness of the remedy to a great many minds. Distinguished scientists like Lord Bacon or Robert Boyle, distinguished surgeons even like Hildanus, but besides them ever so many university men, a number of clergymen, and even lawyers were led into believing in these "cures."

It is almost enough seriously to impair one's faith in the value of human testimony in such matters to read the evidence that accumulated with regard to these cures that were, absolutely without any exception, mental and yet seemed to be wonders of physical healing. Nothing should so warn humanity of the necessity for the greatest circumspection in this matter of accepting "cures" as the histories of such cases. They just represent that supremely humorous tendency of mankind to be "cured"



of its ills by almost anything that attracts its attention and that still more humorous tendency of humanity to think that when "cures" are reported even though there may be no real knowledge of what was the condition before the "cure" was attempted, they must mean that some great new curative agent is at work and that some important new discovery in therapeutics has been made. The delusions and disillusionments of mankind along this line are quite literally legion.

## CHAPTER IX

### ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS, THE SEER OF POUGH-KEEPSIE, AND A FEW OTHERS

**I**T would seem as though the complete collapse of Perkins' tractors as a "cure" would prove quite enough to put Americans on their guard against healers for all time. Surely it might be expected that for at least a century there would be no overcredulousness as to marvelous new cures of disease. But alas for poor human nature, the very next generation was destined to go through an even more striking exemplification of the way that human beings are "cured" by methods that have no physical effect and above all are relieved of serious pains and aches and even crippling by a change in their attitude of mind toward the symptoms from which they were suffering. Just as in the case of Perkins' tractors, this new healer "cured" especially complaints and discomforts of all sorts that sometimes for years had been making their possessors—and their friends—miserable to a serious extent, in spite of the best directed efforts of skilled physicians.

**New York's Turn.**—Another part of the country besides Connecticut, but not so far away, was to have its turn at wonder healing next, and we may say at once that the succeeding generation of New Yorkers "fell" for the new healer quite as readily as his Connecticut neighbors had for Perkins and his tractors. This time it was to be a purely psychical set of remedies, though

once more with a tinge of science supposedly in another form than electrical about it. *The Vestiges of Creation* had been written and the word "evolution" was just beginning to be a vocable with which to conjure. This was of course more than a decade before Darwin's book, and evolution was the magic word that put science into the new "cure." There was, besides, an alluring tincture of religion, or at least of spiritualism, superadded, that undoubtedly added greatly to the efficacy of the new mode of healing and the prestige of the healer. The great progressive Empire State of New York, just as the increase in population made it the most important state in the union, was the scene of it. The time was the middle of the nineteenth century which, almost needless to say, like every other time in human history, thought itself the most wonderful of times up to date. This new successful bidder for the attention of the ailing made no pretense, however, to have anything to do with physics. He was not a university man but just a native genius. He was born up along the Hudson River in rural New York. When Sir Conan Doyle came over to announce to us here in America the good tidings of his "New Revelation," in his very first lecture he told New Yorkers that they should be proud of the fact that their great State had given birth to two of the great sources of this glorious new dispensation of knowledge from on High. One of these was the Fox Sisters, of spirit rapping and bone dislocating fame, from near Rochester, and the other was the genius, who in the middle of the nineteenth century demonstrated for a waiting world a set of cures quite equal to those of Perkins of Connecticut at the beginning of the century. The spirit that presides over the allotting of names to

humanity was not kind to these chosen of the race for distinction. Elisha Perkins is not exactly a name with which "to fill the speaking trump of future fame," but our New York aspirant for immortal honors as a benefactor of the race bore the equally prosaic name of Andrew Jackson Davis. Because of his birthplace not far from Poughkeepsie and his subsequent career in that dear old-fashioned town which our own Chauncey Depew has so long kept on the map, but in which Andrew Jackson Davis displayed his clairvoyant power for health and disease and the mystical advancement of human knowledge, he came to be known as "The Seer of Poughkeepsie."

*Andrew Jackson Davis'* father was a weaver and a shoemaker and in summer a farm laborer and jack-of-all trades, probably in due accord with the old proverb, not very much at any of them, but eking out existence as best he could from his various occupations, according to the varying seasons. Following his son's account, though as we shall see we cannot be sure about all the details given by him, for he had a motive for making them appear worse than they might have been, his father was shiftless and for many years was given to drink, though he was honest, as far as he could be under the circumstances. His mother was thoroughly respectable, though she often had to work hard in order to support the family when father's wages were lacking or insufficient. She was just a woman of the people without any advantages that might have helped or inspired her son. In after life, Davis rather liked to emphasize the lack of anything like proper care in his youth and the absence of any good influences there might have been or any education he might possibly have obtained, be-

cause that enabled him to suggest that all his knowledge was a special inspiration from on High and therefore sure to accomplish wonderful results for mankind.

**Magnetization.**—Young Davis, an undersized, delicate boy, was apprenticed to a shoemaker at the age of about fourteen, and a few years later when he was about seventeen and still working at his trade of making shoes, he heard a lecture on animal magnetism delivered by “Professor” Grimes who was then touring the country and attracting no end of attention—at least as much comparatively as distinguished lecturers on spiritualism in our time. The echoes of mesmerism or animal magnetism and of that curious mental phenomenon which was afterwards to be called hypnotism and at this time was often supposed to be a sort of heaven-sent trance such as we hear of the ancient sibyls having, were being heard all over the United States. Young Davis was very much interested in the lecture and allowed himself to be “magnetized.” He proved to be an apt subject. We know now that this means that he was one in whom major hysteria could be induced readily. He came to believe that there were unplumbed depths in animal magnetism and a few months later under the “magnetization” of one Levingston, a tailor, set up as a clairvoyant who could see things at a distance, read the future and elucidate the misunderstood significance of events in the past. The precious pair very soon attracted attention and began to make a good living by their little adventure in “animal magnetism.” Before long they found, however, that a much more lucrative way of life than telling about lost hearts and lost purses and how and where they might be recovered was to be found in prescribing for disease. So they proceeded

to practice this new kind of medicine. There was nothing in our laws to prevent it. The medieval legislation of the thirteenth century which had made it a punishable offense for a man to practice medicine unless he had spent three years at the university in preparatory studies, four years at the medical school and then had practiced for a year with a physician before setting up for himself, had not been imported into this land of liberty. Any one who wanted to make a fool of himself in the matter of having his ills treated was perfectly free to do so. Accordingly any one who wanted to might proclaim himself as a healer or "curer" of disease—for a consideration—and there was no one to gainsay it. Almost needless to say a great many took advantage of the laxity of the laws and made a good fat living out of "curing" people. There are always people to be "cured" and a great many of them can only be "cured" by something different from what is usual in "cures." Something novel, especially if it is also more than a little mysterious, always has the call for them.

**Special Healing Revelation.**—Andrew Jackson Davis announced that a special revelation for healing purposes had been made to him by the special favor of the Almighty. In March 1844, according to the account given by himself while under the guidance of an inward monitor—I am quoting Frank Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism* (Methuen, London, 1902)—he wandered away into the country in the early spring "and fell into a spontaneous trance" (this would probably be an hysterical seizure) during which Galen and Swedenborg appeared to him and instructed him concerning his healing mission to mankind. His place of meeting with these great men of the past was very interesting and



supposed to be symbolic. It was a country churchyard. It was not exactly what might be considered a place of happy omen for future patients, but it was very impressive and, almost needless to say, after this cemetery instruction it was easy for the young shoemaker to diagnose illnesses which the ordinary physician failed entirely to understand and to prescribe for every disease. He proceeded to do so with marvelous success. Of course all those who believed his story would be quite sure that his intimate relations with these great medical authorities and seers of the past must have given him the vision to see and understand their ailments and the knowledge to apply just those remedies that would be certain to heal their diseases. A great many people laid the flattering unction to their souls that *their* ills needed some such supernatural infusion of wisdom to be properly understood. No mere human knowledge could ever comprehend them.

Cures! Cures!! Cures!!!—The young man, after this, proceeded to cure all sorts of ills and particularly, as always in such experiences in human history, the chronic ailments which had lasted for a long time and had defied the best efforts of the doctors of the neighborhood. As is always true in these incidents of healing, as they unroll themselves down the centuries, it was particularly such affections as were accompanied by pains and aches and disabilities of various kinds—the lame, the halt and the mentally blind at least—who were now “cured” under the wise direction of this heaven-instructed healer.

He abandoned the tailor as a magnetizer and took up with a physician instead and between them they proceeded to make for themselves name and fame and for-

tune out of the clairvoyance of the illuminated one, "The Seer of Poughkeepsie" as he now came to be called. It is almost impossible to credit in our day the accounts that we have of the "cures" that were worked by this young man. People flocked in from all the surrounding country to get the benefit of his ministrations. He did not need to do much materially for people, a mere talk with him was often sufficient to give long suffering victims of disease, as they thought themselves, new strength and a fresh start in life. The simplest of remedies came to be, in his hands, wonder-working cures. He understood disease so well through heavenly help that as might readily be expected, the mystery of it disappeared as by magic—once comprehended all was well. Most chronic invalids feel that they are poor misunderstood mortals whose ills are not properly appreciated. Celestial wisdom, but only that, might solve the problem.

Davis attracted so much attention that he became a national institution and in modern phrase quite put Poughkeepsie on the map. The physician who practiced on Davis by throwing him into his trances benefited at least as much pecuniarily as Davis himself, and the dance of health went merrily on. So many were "cured" that it seemed as though a great new revelation must surely have been made to mankind by which above all the ills of the flesh were made subject to the spirit, and it was only a question of believing firmly to be "cured" of whatever might be the matter.

**Clairlativeness.**—Davis made all sorts of absurdly exaggerated claims for his power of vision when in the clairvoyant state, but this intellectual egoism had no effect in deterring people from accepting his teachings

and benefiting by his ministrations. Quite the contrary they swallowed them all and were so deeply impressed by his claims that their "cure" was well begun and more than half done by an interview with him. In 1845, there was published in New York a small pamphlet containing four lectures by Davis under the title "Lectures on Clairmativeness." Later Davis declared that this should have been "clairlativeness." Take your choice! Davis was great in the invention of new words, and they were always long, seldom of less than four syllables. His followers were sure that they were needed to express the new ideas he was bringing into the world. In this brief work he expounded "the mysteries of human magnetism and electricity." Marvelously taking ideas had, during the generations since Franklin's discovery of the identity of lightning and electricity and Oersted's demonstration of the identity of electricity and magnetism, come to be associated in the popular mind with those words. There seemed no end of possibilities of benefit for man in connection with them, and every new phase of knowledge, supposed or real, with regard to them, was sure to attract attention. Since a great many sufferers were quite convinced that every possible advance in scientific knowledge must surely be intended by a wise Providence for the cure of human ills and above all for the relief of their particular affection, it was not long before a great many people became persuaded that Davis' development of intimacy with the other world represented a new dispensation meant especially for them. In this pamphlet, which we have mentioned, Davis writes of himself in the clairvoyant state as having almost, if not quite, divine powers. "I possess the power of extending my vision throughout

all space, can see things past, present and to come. I have now arrived at the highest degree of knowledge which the human mind is capable of acquiring. . . . I am master of the general sciences, can speak all languages, etc., etc.” The man was manifestly a victim of a series of delusions of grandeur. The curious thing is that paranoiacs who have such delusions often have the wit to make converts to their ideas.

The greater the claims that are made, even to the height of absurdity, the readier a great many men and women are to accept them. Moderate, sensible, thoroughly rational claims they pay little attention to, but let a man once insist that he knows more than all the world put together about something or other and especially about disease and that in addition power has been given him to heal it and it is astounding how many men and women will flock around him and be willing to give him money and actually be “cured”—at least for a time—of their ills. Of course, they proceed at once to tell their friends all about their “cure” before they know whether it is real or not, so that they, too, may share the benefit of this new and wondrous development that has taken place for the benefit of our generation.

*The Poughkeepsie seer* was not satisfied, however, with his magnetic and medical successes, but feeling convinced that he actually possessed or by divine favor could secure information about the whole range of knowledge, both things knowable and unknowable which the world should possess, but hitherto concealed from men, he proceeded to enlighten his generation by a series of divine revelations. The small town sphere was not large enough for one of his ambitions and prospects, so he abandoned Poughkeepsie, took lodgings in

New York City and while continuing to practice as a medical clairvoyant under circumstances that assured him a good living, he had himself entranced several times a day and during his trances dictated a new philosophy of the universe. His "revelations" on the subject were received during the course of some two years and were published in New York (1847) in a large octavo volume of some 800 closely printed pages. This book bore the modest title *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations and a Voice to Mankind*. This was dictated during the trances and as there were often witnesses present, sometimes even persons of note, for Davis attracted attention among people of every class and those who were present often countersigned the reports, it is probable that we have the "revelations" substantially in the form in which Davis uttered them.

When it is recalled how many really worthwhile books drop stillborn from the press and not only never bring their authors any reward but even cause them material loss, it is interesting to see what happened to this farrago of mystic dreamings, wild statements and pseudo-science, mingled with some of the social doctrines which Owens and Fourier and others were popularizing at that time. Brook Farm and many other social experiments were in progress just then and what may be called socialistics was on the tapis. It is curious how these supposed heavenly messages always take color from the current interests of earth.

*Davis' Revelations* actually ran through thirty-four editions in less than thirty years. It was "the best seller" of the time by far and it was the best seller among books that had been produced in America since the beginning of the nation. I have never met anybody who



had ever seen it, though the last edition of it was issued after the Civil War. Of course it is dead, ever so much deader than the proverbial mackerel, but it was looked upon as a wonder by a great many people in its own time. Even university professors greeted it as a great contribution to human knowledge, a really epoch-making book due to the stooping of heaven to earth as it were. Human nature is a very curious thing!

**Matter All.**—I reviewed Davis' contribution to what was considered the literary and philosophic life of his time in my work on the *History of Medicine in New York* (Americana Society, New York, 1917). There was simply no limit to the popularity which the man secured and Davis became literally the most popular writer of his day. What we see now as a hodgepodge of the flimsiest of glittering generalities, mere words and nothing more, was hailed by a great many contemporaries as sublime transcendental thinking and writing. They were impelled to think so by the wonderful "cures" the Seer was making every day. A young man, Frank Sanborn, while in the confidence and association of the famous Concord group in which were Emerson, Lowell, Longfellow, Alcott, Hawthorne, Channing and others, kept a journal, as was the fashion of the day, which was published in the *Century Magazine* last year. He mentions, in the April number, A. T. Davis as having been the subject of discussion and undoubtedly means our own Andrew Jackson. Alcott said of him: "He is a simple, earnest man, but to him matter is everything; spirit at its extreme limit is still matter. It is better to say boldly that we are not formed from matter, but that we ourselves form it, that the eye creates what it looks upon, the desires what they act upon, etc." He



went to just the opposite extreme from Mrs. Eddy for whom matter does not exist but in the mind, yet strange to say his book had as great a sale as Mrs. Eddy's book in our time.

Here are the opening paragraphs of the book which a Professor of Hebrew in a New York university, looked upon as one of the most scholarly teachers of the metropolis at the time, declared to be "one of the most finished specimens of philosophical argument in the English language."

"In the beginning the Univercælum was one boundless, undefinable, and unimaginable ocean of Liquid Fire! The most vigorous and ambitious imagination is not capable of forming an adequate conception of the height and depth and length and breadth thereof. There was one vast expanse of liquid substance. It was without bounds—inconceivable—and with qualities and essences incomprehensible. This was the original condition of Matter. It was without forms, for it was but *one* Form. It had no motions, but it was an eternity of Motion. It was without parts, for it was a Whole. Particles did not exist, but the Whole was as *one* Particle. There were no suns, but it was one Eternal Sun. It had no beginning and it was without end. It had no length, for it was a Vortex of one Eternity. It had no circles, for it was one Infinite Circle. It had no disconnected power, but it was the very essence of all Power. Its inconceivable magnitude and constitution were such as not to develop forces, but Omnipotent Power."

Words! words! words! but "cures! cures! cures!" went with them so university folk fell for them quite as some of them do to-day for our healers whenever the "cures" affect themselves or their friends. Andrew Jackson

Davis could sling words almost to deceive even the elect. It is marvelous how he got away with it, but he did to the tune of the best seller of its time. Here is some more of the precious stuff.

“Matter and power were existing as a Whole, inseparable. The *Matter* contained the substance to produce all suns, all worlds, and systems of worlds, throughout the immensity of Space. It contained the qualities to produce all things that are existing upon each of those worlds. The *Power* contained Wisdom and Goodness, Justice, Mercy and Truth. It contained the original and essential Principle that is displayed throughout immensity of Space controlling worlds and systems of worlds, and producing Motion, Life, Sensation, and Intelligence, to be impartially disseminated upon their surfaces as ultimates.”

Physician-in-ordinary to the Senate.—A good idea of how much attention Andrew Jackson Davis was able to attract to himself may be gathered from the fact that a political friend secured for him a hearing before the United States Senate, and the Senators, it is said, were deeply impressed not only by his address but, above all, by reports that were brought to them of the “cures” that were effected by him. “Cures” have always been supposed to have wonderful evidential value in bringing credit to healers of various kinds and acceptance of their teachings. As a rule, these cures have been effected by all sorts of means which afterwards proved to have no physical effect and only served to impress the minds of certain people who were laboring under ailments that were due to dreads and to the fact that a great many people, once they have begun to suffer from a disease, must be “cured” in some impressive way or they will

not get better. They refuse to take up their life activities as before nursing their symptoms until some one whose word they accept for some reason promises them a cure and does something or other to them that makes them feel now they ought to be better. There was question, I believe, of making Andrew Jackson Davis a sort of protégé of the national government in order to enable him to work his marvels of healing on all the inhabitants of the country and thus lower the invalidism of the United States. Fortunately, we were saved that—by Providence, not by human wisdom so far as the senate was concerned—and gradually the fame of the Poughkeepsie Seer waned.

**Reaping the Rich Harvest.**—Of course there were a number of similar curious developments about this time and New York was not alone in the fostering of them. There was too much money in the new practice of Davis to be without imitators in many parts of the country. Some of them “cured” quite as successfully as Davis. As “cures” are proof of power they soon attracted attention in their own parts of the country at least. One J. T. Mahan, a youth employed upon an Ohio river steamboat, became a magnetic clairvoyant “and developed a wide sweep and wonderful clearness of mental vision, and brought forth a system of physical and intellectual science” which was proclaimed the product of inspiration from another world. According to the story, Mahan was employed for a time in medical diagnosis by one Dr. Curtis, president of a medical college of Cincinnati. We had many curious medical schools about that time. A young man named Charles Linton entered the field as a rival of Davis. He developed as a writing medium and published, in 1855, “The Healing of the

Nation." Inspired works of this kind always emphasized such notions as the importance of harmonizing oneself with the divinity, getting in touch with the everlasting powers and the like which have become familiar formulas in the modern time in such expressions as "putting oneself in tune with the infinite" or "getting into contact once more with the eternal world force." Glittering generalities along this line have always had a wonderful appeal to mankind, and they have actually aroused the slumbering energies in many men and women and have still oftener released inhibitions and lifted brakes which they had put upon their energies and their natural tendency to get over disease.

Association of Beneficence.—New Thought and metaphysical healing and psychological therapy and other such fads of our time often supposed to be due to the increased education and the diffusion of information and the development of psychology in our day, had their anticipations at this time. Spiritualism fostered a whole series of these medical fakirs. They were not fakirs, in the ordinary sense of the word, many of them, but they had become persuaded that they were possessed of wonderful powers and they found it perfectly possible to convince others of their possession of such powers and then they proceeded to do suffering humanity a lot of good. A certain Mr. Speer proclaimed that a band of spirits called "The Association of Beneficence" had chosen him as their mouth-piece for certain revelations to mankind. He, too, wrote a lot of what is now seen to be the most veritable twaddle. He had much to say with regard to the electrizers or elementizers or healthfulizers of the spirit world. All of these seers were willing and even anxious to be mediums, between man and

the spirit world, for the healing of the ills of mankind—for a due consideration—whatever the traffic would stand. All of them found lots of devoted dupes and made lots of money. And so the wheel of life with its cures, cures, cures went merrily on.

## CHAPTER X

### HYPNOTISM

WHAT a huge joke on that last generation of the last century hypnotism proved to be! The end of the precious nineteenth century took itself very seriously and was quite sure that it was *fin de siècle*, to use its own term, and could not be taken in easily. But it was taken in to the queen's taste, and never more so, in all that concerned hypnotism. How amusing it is to look back, though it is only a little more than twenty-five years ago, to renew the memories of what a wonderful agent for the benefit of mankind hypnotism was proclaimed to be by men whose prestige in medicine and in psychology none could doubt. Of course hypnotism itself, though the name was a nineteenth-century invention, had been known for many centuries. Way back in the seventeenth century old Father Kircher had told the story of hypnotizing a hen by drawing a chalk mark straight out from its bill pressed down to the floor, and of course there are references to hypnotic conditions in the literature of all ages. It was only by the end of the nineteenth century, when the great advances in science took hold of the crude notions which people of the older times had cherished with regard to the hypnotic state and brought them under the influence of our modern wisdom, that light came out of the darkness.



There were some quite intelligent men, though it must be confessed that most of them thought themselves a good deal more intelligent than they were, who were utterly convinced that hypnotism was going to be as great a factor for the development of medicine and psychology as electricity had proved to be for mechanics and for science generally. What electricity had done for the nineteenth-century hypnotism would do for the twentieth century. We were told by those who thought they knew—and a great many university groups particularly “fell” for it—that not only would a whole series of physical ills surely be made to disappear under the benign influence of this concentration of the mental force, but even according to its enthusiastic devotees human nature was to be practically made over by the practice of it.

Specialists in hypnotism, some of whom at least were looked upon as men of intelligence and character, declared that they were finding more and more wonderful elements in it every day. There was almost no end to the prospect for good held out by it. They promised that defective mentality was to be lifted up to a higher plane of intellectuality by a series of hypnotic seances. Criminals were to be reformed by it, morals generally were to be improved under the influence of hypnotic suggestion and the race was to be bettered greatly in both mind and body just as the result of this wonderful discovery of the influence of a strong mind over a weaker one. The invention and development of the technic of the very simple means needed to bring this wonderful new influence into direct play was proclaimed to be one of the world's great discoveries. Human nature would be quite another thing

after the hypnotists got through with their work on it. Strong characters were simply going to lend of their strength to weak ones by the practice of hypnotism and men and women would no longer be unable to face the difficulties of life because hypnotism would supply their defects.

Now that hypnotism has been definitely relegated to the lumber room of disused and useless inventions, or perhaps let us better say practices, this may seem very strong language to use. But as I personally went through the period of the vogue of hypnotism in Paris as a medical student at a time when the cult was most pronounced and even before the Paris experience had heard much of it in this country, I think that I have a right to use such strong language and I know that many who will renew their memories of the time will quite agree with me. I can distinctly remember hearing an assistant professor of psychology at one of the most important universities in this country who had devoted very much time to the study of hypnotism and who was considered to be one of our most advanced thinkers in all the curious psychic phenomena associated with it, declare that he could give a toper, when in the hypnotic state, the suggestion never to touch liquor again and that he was sure that his suggestion would be literally obeyed. It did not matter at all whether the subject of his hypnotic demonstration had seemed to be almost hopelessly addicted to drink before, he would never drink again.

It is easy to understand how we medical students who were invited to listen to this special lecture given for our benefit felt that it was indeed good to be there. Inebriety in those pre-Volstead days was one of the

ills—some ventured to call it a disease—for which the medical profession had been seeking a cure. We were just in the midst of the disillusionment that came as a result of finding out that the Keeley and similar much-advertised cures for inebriety did not work the miracles of healing claimed for them. Hypnotism would be easy. Just think of the happiness that a young medico armed with this latest addition to our therapeutic armament could confer on an almost despairing family by the simple process of hypnotism! Father would never disgrace them again and household contentment would succeed anxiety and solicitude. Most of us went out from that demonstration of hypnotism by a professor of psychology perfectly sure that we had passed one of the most profitable hours of our lives.

Alas, however, for our high hopes, the good professor of psychology at the end of his lecture suggested that he felt that neither he nor any one else had the right to take away another human being's free will in that way and that therefore he had always refrained from exercising this power, even though it might be for the man's good. What wonder that we medical students, discussing the question, voted that these psychologists were very impractical men. We knew that we would have no such scruples. The first inebriate who came to us, in the course of our prospective practice, would be hypnotized out of his craving, he would surely bless us and his family would look upon us a sort of savior. Alas for our expectations, however, almost needless to say, they were never realized. Hypnotism would have about as much effect on the craving for alcohol of a confirmed inebriate as a *placebo* of milk sugar adminis-

tered for the same purpose and carrying the suggestion that it would surely bring the end of the desire.

As regards mental and other corresponding improvement supposed to be brought about by hypnotism, Du Maurier's story of *Trilby* is a practical illustration of the beliefs of that time. Svengali, the villain, a sort of gypsylike possessor of mysterious secrets, hypnotizes little Trilby O'Farrell, the laundry girl who poses in the Paris studios. Straightway she, who has not the slightest sense of tone and who is introduced to us singing "Sweet Alice Ben Bolt" in an awful cacophony of disharmony that was a poignant joke to the "three musketeers of the brush," and especially to little Billy who had fallen in love with her, became such a marvelous singer that the world was immediately at her feet. Her hypnotizer proceeded to take her all over the world and made a fortune on her as a prima donna. There had never been such a singer in all history. Men adored her and women threw their jewels at her feet in an ecstasy of worship of her beautiful voice and her power to arouse and express their emotion. Of course Svengali always had to be present at the performance close by in a box with his hypnotic eye on her. His power was certain and his spell over poor Trilby for divine singing unfailing. When a stroke of apoplexy took him in the box in the midst of a concert, Trilby could only utter the utterly unharmonious sounds that had come from her when she was but a *blanchisseuse* in the old Paris days.

When Du Maurier wrote that, there were a great many people who believed actually and firmly that such an effect of hypnotism even as this was not beyond the bounds of probability, much less possibility. Hypno-

tism was supposed to represent simply a marvelous power of mind over mind, as well as mind over matter, hitherto quite undreamed of, by which the operator could produce effects in the subject that were altogether incredible until science had developed enough to understand them, but which served to show the inexhaustible resources of nature when a progressive generation knew how to take advantage of them. We were not modest in our self-estimation, we others of the later nineteenth century, and it was not surprising that our conceit came the cropper that it did.

It would seem, to those of us who now turn back to read over the accounts of hypnotic experiences and the claims made for the new psychic agent, as though those who believed in the supposed marvels of hypnotism must have lacked in some primary order of intelligence. It is all so clear now that it was just a bit of hysteria spreading through psychic contagion and affecting mainly the educated classes. Lawyers and judges began to wonder whether the criminal law would not have to employ experts in hypnotism to help them to determine whether criminals were really responsible or only hypnotized into a state of mind in which crime was committed. The fascination of the sexes was supposed, in extreme cases, to be really an example of the hypnotic power of one of the parties. Hypnotism became the vogue in novels and was referred to in editorials, and any one who did not know much about it was supposed to be quite ignorant indeed. That generation was quite as ready to drink in these modern marvels as any superstitious generation of the older time had ever taken in and been taken in by the myths and legends of their day.



Like nearly all of these mysterious new dispensations of knowledge, hypnotism secured its greatest vogue by the "cures" which were worked in connection with it. Like most of the other cures that have failed, hypnotism, too, obtained its first serious reputation by the relief that it afforded to pains and aches, especially those associated with muscles and joints and even with muscular disabilities, positive crippplings of one kind or another which had lasted for a considerable time.

I remember hearing in Paris nearly thirty years ago the story of the first experience with hypnotism of the well-known French university professor of medicine, Bernheim of Nancy. As it was to Bernheim that is traced the first practice of hypnotism in connection with the University clinic, and as the published reports of his cases gave the new mode of treatment a respectable place in professional medicine, that story is a landmark not only in the history of hypnotism, but also in the diverting history of the "cures" that have failed. Bernheim was at the time of his experience the head of the medical clinic at Nancy, the University established by the French to replace the University of Strassburg, when, after the Franco-Prussian war that city was taken over by the Germans. He was a man with no little reputation. He had been chosen for his position because the French wanted, as far as possible, to have the new university rival that of Strassburg; just as the Germans were making special efforts to secure and maintain a good faculty of medicine in the capital of Alsace in order to show the inhabitants of the province how much better it was for them to be under German rule. It is easy to understand, then, that Professor Bernheim's advocacy of hypnotism as a valuable thera-



peutic and diagnostic measure did much to give it its vogue in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Professor Bernheim had heard that Dr. Liébeault of Nancy was using hypnotism for the cure of certain classes of patients, but he dismissed the report without serious attention. Liébeault was not attached to the University clinic but was just an ordinary practitioner of medicine. It happened, however, that one day Bernheim met a man who had been one of his own patients who told him that he had been very much improved, indeed the patient said he had been quite "cured" by a series of Liébeault's hypnotizations. This patient had been coming to Bernheim's clinic for many months, suffering from sciatica, and Bernheim had exhausted all his therapeutic resources on him without success. He had not been surprised to miss him from the clinic since after many months of sincere trial to help him they had been unable to do him any good. Bernheim remembered his halting gait and now he found him walking without any sign of disability. When the man greeted him it is not surprising that Bernheim asked how the wonder of healing had come about and the patient declared that he was entirely cured and that he owed it all to hypnotism.

No wonder then that Bernheim looked into the matter further, went to see Liébeault himself and caught some of his enthusiasm for hypnotism and adopted it among the therapeutic measures of his clinic. This was the beginning of that French reawakening of interest in hypnotism which attracted so much attention in the latter part of the nineteenth century and which promised for a time not only to add a new therapeutic resource to medicine but also to provide a wonderful

instrument for improving mankind in every way. Above all there seemed to be no doubt that hypnotism was going to prove the key to unlock many secrets with regard to the human mind and add an important new chapter to modern scientific psychology.

Hypnotism was taken up very enthusiastically in Paris and all the medical world looked to Charcot's clinic there for new light on many subjects and details of our knowledge of the human mind as the result of this new marvelous process. Even so conservative a man as Cardinal Mercier in his younger years as a professor at Louvain went down to Paris—*incognito* to save appearances in the clinic—in order to secure definite and detailed information from personal observation of this new avenue to psychological knowledge. Psychologists from all over the world looked toward Paris or at least to France and many of them went to study under Charcot or under Bernheim at Nancy with the feeling that by so doing they were getting at the very latest advance of knowledge as to the mysterious processes of the human mind. No wonder that when Du Maurier wrote *Trilby* the book at once became a best seller, was translated into all the modern languages, and was looked upon by many people as a serious contribution to science rather than merely an interesting romance woven out of the flimsiest of pseudo-scientific materials.

Charcot never quite gave in his adhesion to the claims of hypnotism as a definite therapeutic measure and he came after a time to distrust it very thoroughly and to feel that it was likely to do more harm than good. Then in the early nineties came the famous exposure of dear old Dr. Luys in Paris. Dr. Luys, who was on the staff

of the prominent hospital of La Pitié in Paris, proceeded to demonstrate in a series of clinics, which when reported, attracted world-wide attention, that drugs could be rendered ever so much more effectual when hypnotism was superposed on their administration. A very small dose would be sufficient to produce thoroughgoing physiological effect if the patient were hypnotized about the time that it was supposed to act and given suggestions favorable to the medicines' activity. Actually it seemed to be proved after a while that drugs did not have to find their way into the body at all to produce their effects. A dose of opium need only be placed in a phial held in the hand and all the pain-relieving and hypnotic effects of opium would be felt if the patient were only put into the hypnotic condition. Even purgatives might be taken the same way. I remember very well the declaration of a distinguished old professor of medicine who had been reading the accounts of Professor Luys' work, having known him years before in Paris and trusting him fully, that these wonderful new discoveries were just turning the world of medicine upside down. He felt that we had in it the long-sought key to unlock the mystery of the influence of mind on body.

Then came the dramatic exposure by Dr. Ernest Hart, editor of the *Journal of the British Medical Association*. Luys meant well and thought that he was reporting actual effects, but was being fooled by his patients, or rather his supposed hypnotic subjects. It was very much the same thing as had occurred in the preceding generation in England when Dr. Eliotson had been similarly imposed upon by his patients and subjects. Luys' patients were supposed to be

extremely susceptible to hypnotism, subjects sensitive to the highest degree and were kept comfortably housed in the hospital, treated well and paid liberally besides receiving tips of various kinds from physicians and visitors from all over the world who were interested in their manifestations. Besides they were being kept in the limelight, the very center of interest and they had enough of hysterical love for that sort of thing to find it intensely pleasant. Accordingly, they had gone on inventing new manifestations of the supposed hypnotic state, taking suggestions from physicians around them as to the next development that might be expected until there actually seemed to be no end to the marvelous influence that this newly-discovered psychological condition might possess.

Now, twenty-five years afterwards, the minds of the medical profession are pretty well made up as to what hypnotism actually is. We have come to understand hysteria and hypnotism ever so much better than before and the definition of hysteria has come to be super-suggestibility. We now know that hypnotism is very closely related to hysteria and that indeed the most important manifestation of it is the taking of suggestions. It is very probable that the best definition of hypnotism that we have is that it is induced hysteria. Hysteria is a disease in itself and yet all sorts of cures of affections of many kinds, some of them apparently physical and most of them having some physical element were being obtained by hypnotism. It would remind one very much of the old country doctor who was asked by a younger colleague what he was doing for the case of a particularly puzzling patient and the old doctor said very frankly: "Well, I am quite free

to confess that I don't know what is the matter with him, but I am giving him something that I think will throw him into fits and if there is one thing in the world that I am great on it is fits. I will cure him of those and then I hope that when they disappear they will carry away with them whatever else he has the matter with him."

In the midst of all this interest in hypnotism, it is interesting now to look back and see how physicians of broad experience and thoughtfulness began to realize that hypnotism was a dangerous remedy and likely to do much more harm than good. It had been proclaimed just a wonderful agent for the cure of most of the psychoneurotic disorders which had proved so intractable and often consistently obstinate to treatment that disturbed physicians very much. Now came the realization that whatever it might seem to do in modifying these conditions, it almost invariably left them worse. It was introduced because of the cures that it made. Some of these were marvelous to a degree that inevitably produced the impression that in the case of hypnotism we were dealing with a psychic force that went deeply to the root of nervous affections and probably represented a powerfully favorable influence in the nervous system. Instead of this it was found to be just a perversion of nervous force which almost inevitably left the patients who were most susceptible to it in a far worse condition than they had been before and above all with a likelihood of developing all sorts of symptoms which they had not suffered from up to this time.

Dr. John K. Mitchell, the son of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, and the representatives at the moment of the



Philadelphia school of neurology—to which America and indeed the world owes more probably than to any other, except that of Paris—was very emphatic a dozen of years ago in expressing his condemnation of hypnotism. Every word of his has been reëchoed emphatically by the French school of neurology in more recent years. They have come to realize and to confess that hypnotism in various forms created a number of the so-called *grandes hysteriques*, the major hysteria cases which all the medical world used to go to Paris to study because more of them could be found there than anywhere else. How funny it all is that they were unconsciously creating their own cases of major neuroses for demonstration and therapeutic purposes.

Dr. Mitchell said:

“The greatest danger of all is the use of hypnotism in any form or degree, a two-edged sword, capable indeed of usefulness, but more capable of harm. After years of study, beginning with too easy an approval of it, hypnotism, whether called by that name or by the unsuitable one of suggestion, has been laid aside by the medical profession as a means too dangerous for ordinary use, involving great risk of deterioration of character in the subject if often repeated, and putting a terribly tempting tool in the hands of the user, fascinating in the ease with which it can produce superficial and temporary good results and equally capable of being used for harmful ones.

“A susceptible person, once hypnotized, is more and more easily thrown into the hypnotic state until even the slightest hint suffices to bring about the condition. It is not necessary for the hypnotization to go so far as deep sleep; this more advanced stage is indeed seldom required, and to say that persons are not hyp-



notized because they are not put into a sleep or a trance shows ignorance of the subject.

"I am not asserting that very slight degrees of the hypnotic condition are as dangerous as the deeper, but I do say that all degrees of it are dangerous to the integrity and healthy action of the subject's nervous system. The danger of harm increases with every repetition of the hypnotization.

"In suggestible, that is, over-susceptible, individuals, who are almost universally neurotic persons, to fix the eyes on a small point, especially a bright one, sometimes even to fix the mind on the one idea of going into the hypnotic state (mild or deep), is enough without further intervention from any one to put them into that state."

In recent years we have come to realize more and more the ever imminent dangers of hypnotism. The practice did temporary good in certain mild cases of hysteria and occasionally interrupted a series of attacks of major hysteria. It always brought deterioration of character with it and if practiced to any extent inevitably increased the susceptibility of the patients to suggestion. Hysteria is only supersuggestibility so that it is easy to see how harm was done. When hypnotism was at the climax of its interest it catered to the dispositions of hysterical people, put them in the limelight for a time and therefore, by fostering their vanity, sometimes led them to such self-control as seemed to mean a great deal for their benefit. Whenever any procedure or remedy or mode of treatment or psychic alterative, or anything else does good for hysteria, it is always to be suspected. As we have said elsewhere, hysteria has made the development of therapeutics more difficult than it otherwise would have been. All sorts of hys-

teria or psychoneurotics—and it is perfectly possible for hysteria to simulate almost any disease in the category of our nosology—may be cured by suggestion and this suggestion may be carried by anything at all, material or psychic, physical or spiritual that produces a definite effect on the patient's mind.

Hence the vagaries of our therapeutics. Hence the truth of that striking expression of the old French physician that the therapeutics of any generation are always absurd to the next generation. Hypnotism worked its cures in the later nineteenth century and in some form or other has worked many cures in nearly every generation whose medical history we know well enough to be able to recognize this particular feature. It works wonders on unsophisticated people and in India, particularly, has produced very marvelous effects of healing and above all of anæsthesia. Any number of serious surgical operations have been done under hypnotism in India with absolute lack of all reaction of painful sensation. This was accomplished, however, in England to such an extent just before the middle of the nineteenth century that when the announcement came from America of the use of ether as an anæsthetic, it attracted very little attention because so many English physicians were experimenting with hypnotism for this same purpose and were getting such contradictory results as to make them distrustful of all anæsthesia.

Nothing probably could show better how much hypnotism could accomplish on occasion than this. As a matter of fact, it has worked most marvelous cures of what were supposed to be most severe pains and aches, "cures" which particularly affected educated people

and seemed to be almost miracles of healing. Now we know that not only of itself hypnotism does no good, but it does positive harm. The favorable suggestions of cures that went with it, however, were quite sufficient in a great many cases not only to overcome this harmful tendency, but also to cure the psychoneurotic elements in the affection that the patient was suffering from. The literature that gathered around it is so immense as to constitute important departments in large libraries. It must not be forgotten, however, that all this is only a phase of hysteria. It may be labeled psychology or the metaphysical, or mental science or any other nice, long, mouth-filling word, but it is just plain hysteria.

The chapter of human history with regard to hypnotism ought to be the best warning of distrust for the human mind in matters of illness and its cure that we possibly could have. There is no doubt at all, however, that in some new and apparently novel form hypnotism will come back to us again in the course of the next generation. There are manifest signs already that our generation is intensely hysterical minded. This is not surprising for we are bringing up our young folks on suggestion to such an extent that supersuggestibility is almost inevitable and from that to giving themselves suggestions, which is one form of hypnotism sometimes labeled auto-hypnotism, is only a very short step.

## CHAPTER XI

### APPLIANCE CURES

**N**EARLY every substance under the sun and a few others besides have cured people of all sorts of ills when taken inwardly, but practically everything else has made similar cures when applied outwardly. The appliances that have been announced as making wonderful cures and which after a longer or shorter interval have proved to be quite useless or altogether supererogatory paraphernalia without any curative influence of any kind deserve to make a special chapter in the history of medical humor. When the Austrian professor of astronomy, Hell, made his magnets in the shape of various organs in order that they might have a definite curative effect on those organs, he was taking advantage not only of the mystery of magnetism for curative purposes, but also the suggestive influence of an especially shaped appliance. Shapes have had wonderful influence on the mind of man for good and ill. Professor Hell in Vienna effected some wonderful cures of long-standing ills, but the magnetic energy of his magnets had nothing to do with them. It was their contour that made a special appeal to the mind and worked the cure. A kidney-shaped magnet or one of the form of the liver or the heart would create expectancy and provide suggestion more than just a magnet of ordinary shape.

**Rubber Plasters, Kidney-Shaped.**—The idea of having the appliance shaped like the internal organ which it was expected to affect has been a favorite one in the history of appliance cures. Plasters, for instance, that are employed for the purpose of affecting the kidneys favorably at many times have been shaped like kidneys. It was a rare thing to examine a patient in a New York dispensary twenty-five years ago and not find a kidney-shaped plaster sticking firmly to his back. Pains in the lower part of the back are at once presumed by a great many people to represent kidney trouble. The old notion fostered in modern times by the pictured advertisements in the newspapers in which a man is represented as holding his hand to his back in order to allay the pain and the accompanying words indicate that he is a sufferer from his kidneys. As a matter of fact, except in acute nephritis or unless there is a stone in the kidney, the kidneys never give any pain. They are quite insensitive to all ordinary irritation and the worst cases of Bright's disease representing at least seven-eighths of all the kidney diseases, so-called, run their course altogether insidiously and without any discomfort to attract attention to them. They are often discovered merely by accident, as in an examination for life insurance or in some other routine way. A distinguished clinician who had studied kidney diseases very carefully once declared that the only place that he knew that the kidneys ever gave pain was in the newspapers.

As another matter of fact these lumbar pains, so often referred to the kidneys, are usually due to irritation set up in the muscles of which there are a number in this region existing in several layers that have to play freely over each other when moved. These do

not always work well after a wetting, or after the wearing of damp clothes, and then they give pain. When this happens almost anything that will support the skin surface a little firmly so as to form a sort of splint to the outer layer of muscles will often serve greatly to relieve the pain in this region. Hence the reputation which plasters of various kinds have secured for relieving pains of this kind. It does not matter very much what shape they may take provided they are of pretty good size and adhere firmly. When several layers are used they are always more efficacious.

A great many different kinds of drugs have been employed to make these plasters curative, but the one all-efficient substance is the rubber of which the plaster is composed and which causes it to adhere. Most of the medicated plasters have no greater efficacy than ordinary unmedicated rubber plaster. This acts as a support and gives a sense of relief. It is marvelous to read the testimonials, however, to the healing virtues of the various plasters that have been published. In most cases these have come from perfectly sincere, cured patients. Some of them had a lame back for years when they heard of this special plaster and, by the advice of a friend, bought it and have been well ever since. Some of them tell of important changes in their systems which have come as a consequence of wearing these plasters, always of a particular kind, of course, and they are ready to announce to suffering humanity that probably nothing would do them more good than to wear one of these plasters. Lumbar pains or what is known as lumbago, has furnished a reputation for so many curative modes and means that it is not surprising to find it yielding to rubber plaster. Most



people are acutely conscious of the fact that they have a rubber plaster on and if they are persuaded that it is doing them good, then they have a constant suggestion toward cure. Sometimes this is of itself sufficient to produce wonderful results. Liébeault, who, as it will be seen in the chapter on hypnotism, was ultimately responsible for the wave of interest in hypnotism which culminated in France in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, used to cure his lumbago patients by having them wear a sheet of writing paper over their backs held in place by their belt, but giving that constant tactual sensation which paper will give when thus applied. He reported some excellent results, though he attributed the good results to suggestion rather than to any good effect exerted by the paper itself.

There have been a number of other regions of the body which have been the favorite subject of appliances of one kind or another, for curative purposes. There are a series of plants known as liverworts, some of whose leaves are supposed to be shaped like the liver and this was considered to be a sort of "signature" which nature had placed on them for the purpose of indicating their end in so far as cures were concerned. These were applied in the fresh state or made into a poultice and applied with wonderful good effects upon the liver. Of course there was nothing in the idea, but their use was followed by many wonderful cures.

**Liver Pads.**—A favorite remedial appliance when I was a boy, for I remember them hanging on sight in the windows in the drug stores and sometimes also in the windows of the general stores of that time, were liver pads. These were pads of various shapes and sizes

containing a variety of simples, hops, gentian, pennyroyal and the like, which were supposed to be very efficient in stimulating the liver. They were just applied to the skin surface over the liver and some of them were supposed to be particularly effective for the correction of jaundice and that universal disease, biliousness, as well as other similar conditions. The number of wonderful cures worked by these harmless applications was without end for a time and there was an abundance of testimonials to demonstrate the fact that they had made life worth living for a great many people after it had seemed clear for years that life could never be worth while again. Some of the pads were rather thick and were applied below the margin of the ribs and were supposed to be put on while the patient was lying down and then held in place by the corset. Under these circumstances they would hold a floating kidney in place, for they were placed almost exactly in the position in which physicians put the pads that are meant to hold a loose kidney in place. No wonder then that many received relief. They were quite sure, however, that they had been relieved by the medicinal value of the herbs in the pad exerted on their livers and they were really favorably influenced by the mechanical effect of the pad on a loose kidney. Such are the ways of men and women.

**Chest Protectors.**—One appliance that was an abomination of desolation to physicians was the so-called lung protector or chest protector. It usually consisted of a sort of scapular made more often of red flannel or some other red material with an opening for the head, rather wide straps for the shoulders, and then shieldlike pieces that hung down in front and behind.

Sometimes it was made of quilted material, occasionally with a silk facing for the skin and sometimes the inner covering of it was made of chamois, but always there was red about it. Just why red was such a favorite color is a little hard to understand until one goes back to the doctrine of signatures. According to that there are certain colored articles which produce corresponding color effects in the system. For instance, for the anemic who are rather pale in color, and likely to feel the cold very much, the wearing of red flannel underclothing was recommended in the older time. The doctrine of signatures, however, worked both ways, so that red undergarments were good for conditions complicated by redness. People subject to rheumatism, that is having a tendency to red and swollen joints, wore red flannel on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*, like is cured by like. The red flannel was known by adepts of the cult of signatures to be ever so much more effective than the same material of any other color.

As the result of the belief in the value of chest protectors, many hundreds of them were sold because a great many people thought they afforded protection against cold before it developed and had a curative effect on it after it developed, and above all that the tuberculous or consumptive were greatly helped by it. I have seen patients in the dispensary who had scarcely money enough—sometimes actually did not have money enough to buy the food that was so absolutely necessary for them—who somehow found the cash to buy a chest protector because some neighbor had suggested its possible value and they saw it hanging luridly in all its red splendor in the druggist's window. The chest protectors are gone—or nearly so I hope—never to return.

Surely they did ever so much more harm than good and I doubt if there is any possible reason in medicine as we know it to-day for thinking that they could have done any good. Yet there were people who would tell you quite confidently that they had known men, sometimes near relatives who had been given up for consumption who were now well and hearty because they took to wearing a chest protector. I have known others who were quite sure that they had in their own cases noted that when a cold was beginning they could bring it to a premature ending by simply donning their invaluable chest protector and wearing it for a few days.

It is wonderful to think of all the different remedies that have served to "break up" a cold. There never should be any colds that persist since so many ways of breaking them up have been found. And yet they continue to develop among us and some of them prove serious and afford opportunities for the complication of pneumonia in spite of the many remedies announced as putting an end to them. The lung protector or chest protector was probably as harmless as any of the rest of these cold-throttling remedies, but it was quite as useless. Indeed there was the feeling in physicians' minds that because the chest protector left the space under the arm uncovered by this extra thickness of garment it represented a real danger. The thought is dubious, though worthy of consideration. Nearly every one of these much advertised remedies which people paid so freely for did harm rather than good, but the consumption cures continue to be sold and patients continue to provide testimonials for them, some of which were particularly efficient in the sales campaign for the disposal

of the remedy months or even years after the patient who gave the testimonial was dead.

**Electric Belts.**—Once electricity became looked upon as possessing a potent force for good on the human system, the number of electrical appliances supposed to have medicinal value multiplied. Electric belts were advertised extensively and were evidently used far more extensively because the advertisements continued for years. They were made of chamois or other leather and contained a series of discs of metal supposed to be in contact and considered to be activated by the bodily electricity or by the warmth of the body—or by something. Men were represented wearing them with streams of electricity flowing up and down their backs and into all their members and presumably, of course, doing wonderful work in their abdominal region. Occasionally the belts were made to be worn as shoulder straps or in some other curious fashion and many, many people were cured by means of them. Electric belts and chest protectors were two forms of appliance cures that we young physicians in dispensary work a generation or so ago used to expect confidently to see at least one of whenever we asked a patient to strip. The poorer the patient the more his money was needed for nutritional purposes and the more abject his condition, the surer we were that the removal of garments would disclose the presence of one if not both of these precious appliances. Of course we were often told the story that they had been bought for them by kindly neighbors and sometimes we believed the story, but oftener we believed it was a bit of apology for their turning up at the dispensary to be treated for nothing, though they



had had money enough to buy these rather expensive objects.

It was simply surprising to see the faith they had in them and how confidently they would tell of the relief that had been afforded them, though they had to confess that there was still some trouble left for which they were applying to us for treatment. Wearers of the electric belts for which they had sometimes paid as high at \$25 were quite sure in nearly every case that it was only a question of time until the electric belt would surely cure them, only unfortunately they did not have the time to allow it to get in all its work, as yet, and therefore they had applied for the help that would be afforded by the doctors at the dispensary. After a while we came to be quite sure ourselves that if we did succeed in benefiting them in any way it would not be attributed to us but to the electric belt. In the meantime, whenever we would permit them our patients would dilate on the virtues of these wonderful appliances and how neighbors whom they knew had been "cured" by them and that they were awfully sorry that they had not secured them quite in time.

**Electric Medal Batteries.**—After electric belts the next most popular, at least supposed electrical contrivance, was an electrical medal supposed to be a whole electric battery in itself, that was worn suspended from a string or a fine wire chain, around the neck just long enough so that the medal would rest over the heart and impart its electrical energy to that long suffering organ. The medal was visibly made of a series of discs of different metals, presumably copper and zinc bound together with a hoop of zinc or some other white metal and considered by many to be marvelously effective for



the cure of all sorts of internal ills. Twenty-five years ago it was an extremely common occurrence to find these on the breasts of patients, and ten years before I think they used to be even commoner. The circular advertisements which described them always gave a picture of a man with one of these on his chest and currents of electricity radiating in all directions from it. These were to be seen also in the newspaper advertisements of this wonderful electrical renewer of health and strength. Of course the only place that the electricity flowed out of either the belt or the medal was in the newspapers and other advertising material. There never was an ion of electricity of any kind in connection with them, but I have had people who have been educated in our common schools and some of them even in our high schools tell me that they were sure that either the belt or the medal had saved their lives, and they wore them so faithfully that it was perfectly evident that they must have had absolute faith in them.

**Electric Rings.**—Another favorite electrical contrivance of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, though I have seen them worn by old men in the twentieth, were the so-called electric rings. These were supposed to be made of a combination of metals which in the presence of the acid sweat of the body, as was explained very much in detail in the advertising announcements, produced a constant current of electricity which cured anything and everything that was the matter with the individual. They were supposed to be worn on the third finger of the left hand because according to a very old tradition there is a vein or artery—or something—which goes directly from this finger straight to the heart. That is after all, as is

very well known, the reason why the marriage ring is worn on that finger. The electric ring had to be worn just next to the wedding ring and for ladies was made in heavy gold plate, the inside of the ring, however, in contact with the skin being without any plating so that all the electrical effects were secured just as in the ordinary unplated ring. I have seen thoroughly intelligent men wearing these rings, and I knew a man who made—and kept—a quarter of a million dollars, not only to wear one of these rings himself for years, but to delight in sending examples of the ring to his friends, perfectly sure that they would relieve their pains and aches; for the ring was almost a panacea for all rheumatic conditions, such as muscle and joint troubles that might be worse in rainy weather.

**Drawing Out Disease.**—This good man used to take off his ring in my presence and a little ostentatiously wipe out the inside of it and then show me the brown stain which was to be found on his handkerchief. He was wont to explain that this was the disease material which the ring “drew” out of him every day and that had it been allowed to remain in his system he would undoubtedly after a time have come down with an attack of either gout or rheumatism; or perhaps the retention of this effete material would have predisposed him to other and more serious affections. What he wiped off was just iron-rust; for the ring, I think, was nothing more than a piece of steel or perhaps wrought iron. I do not think there was any other metallic element in it but iron. The idea that disease products or the *materies morbi*, the very essence of disease itself, can be “drawn” out of us by some application or appliance is an old-fashioned idea that still persists in a

great many people's minds and this man was sure that his electrical ring had that power and that its current searched out the innermost parts of the body and then "drew" out to itself all the evil which might then be wiped off with a handkerchief. It was a very naïve explanation of the mystery of disease, but it was fully accepted and many thousands of people bought the rings and most of them were, for a time at least, benefited, if not actually cured by this electrical energy which was flowing from their third finger into their very heart's core all the day and all the night long and doing them good. The rings sold themselves or at least enthusiastic wearers who had been "cured" or greatly relieved gave their testimonials and recommended them to all who would listen.

**Electric Insoles.**—There were still further electrical appliances, some of which were very amusing. A dear old uncle complained much about his feet and finally I asked to be allowed to see them for I suspected that he had flat feet. There was some little hesitancy apparent at first as to his showing them to me, which I attributed to his feeling that possibly they might not be as clean as they ought to. I found, however, that the reason for the dilatory response to my suggestion was because he was wearing a pair of insoles which he had recently purchased and which were guaranteed to relieve sore feet of all kinds. They consisted of a sole-shaped strip of copper to be worn in one shoe, and another of zinc to be worn in the other. He explained to me that, of course as I must know, zinc and copper furnished electrical currents and that the electricity flowed from the zinc plate up one leg and then down the other over to the copper plate and that he was sure

that already he felt much better. I am sorry to say that in spite of his faith in them I took them away and had him get into shoes properly designed to relieve his flat foot, but that he was not quite sure even after these made him ever so much better whether the improvement that he had noted had not come as the result more of his wearing the electrical insoles for some time before I disposed of them, than to any other thing that had been done for him. He was a man of thoroughgoing common sense who thought deeply about many subjects, whose father had been a schoolmaster in Ireland and yet he was just simply carried away by the electrical cure of his feet.

**Magic Shoes.**—All sorts of things, some of them quite commonplace, have proved to the marvelously curative under special circumstances. A few years ago through a court procedure we learned of the use of "magic shoes" by which men were being "cured" of all sorts of crippling conditions and above all of certain severe forms of organic nervous diseases. These shoes were made by a shoemaker who had originally begun the manufacture of special shoes for the relief of flat foot. After a time he acquired a reputation and soon people suffering from all sorts of disturbances and especially painful conditions in the lower limbs were applying to him. He had begun by getting \$25 for his special shoes, but after a while the price was \$100, \$200, even \$500 or more—as much as the tariff would stand. Of course flat foot with its attendant painful conditions of the legs may masquerade as a rather serious affection of the legs. I have known it to give such persistent discomfort for years that it made people feel sure that they must be suffering from some serious

and progressive affection and not infrequently they have felt that there must be an organic nervous condition, or perhaps some insidious kidney affection, or possibly some very serious circulatory disturbance of constitutional origin.

Occasionally when one of the arches has yielded more than the other there may be a one-sided condition which leads to some sympathetic disturbance of the trunk muscles on the same side and particularly to some hip joint or regional uneasiness and the feeling that there must be an organic condition of some kind in that neighborhood. Over and over again every physician has seen such cases "cured" simply by being put into properly fitting and properly shaped shoes. It is not surprising then that this shoemaker began to make wonderful cures and that his shoes came to have the reputation of magic shoes. Before long he was giving so much relief to patients suffering from locomotor ataxia and to certain atypical forms of disseminated sclerosis, that word went abroad that here at last was a "cure" for these so-called incurable diseases. Doctors are advertised by "cured" or relieved patients and the shoemaker was soon surrounded by a large clientèle of sufferers from all sorts of diseases who were quite convinced that his shoes had some magic quality in them. After having been told by physicians that they could not be "cured" by any means known to medicine, were they not ever so much better, relieved of their pains, with their disabilities lessened, all because they were wearing these wonderful shoes? Unfortunately for the inventor of the shoes the Court did not look at it quite that way and the shoemaker came under the arm of the law and had to cease his activities but not without protest from



many "cured" patients who felt that a great mistake was being made and that a magnificent new resource for the relief of suffering humanity was being suppressed by physicians who were jealous of its success.

**The Blue-Glass Craze.**—But "cures," even striking "cures" of long standing ills complicated by pains and aches, especially worse in rainy weather, have been effected by applications that have had none of the material quality of these substantial appliances of one kind or another I have already described. The story of the "blue glass cure" in this country is very interesting in this regard and quite typical of all these curious "cures." A glass-making firm by an egregious blunder of a clerk made much more blue glass than they could find any sale for. It was a drug on the market. They offered a salesman a substantial bonus if he would dispose of it. He had a scientific friend of whom he asked what new use might be discovered for blue glass. The scientist had a sense of humor and he said: "Well, the blue end of the spectrum is where the actinic rays are which act upon photographic plates; they ought to act also to stimulate tissues and cure disease." So the salesman got the idea of advertising the blue glass as good for all sorts of pains and aches. One of the well-known old generals of the Civil War wrote in to ask about the value of blue glass for the chronic pains and aches of his old wounds and the salesman assured him that it would certainly do him good, and inspired entirely by a patriotic motive, of course, offered to supply the old general with the blue glass necessary for him to try it. The old general bared his wounds and let the blue light shine on them for several hours of the day and



very soon to his agreeable surprise they were much better.

At the moment the general was one of the best known survivors of the Civil War officers, a leader in the Grand Army of the Republic—the American Legion of that day. Any news with regard to the old general was of national import, so the item was flashed through the country. Every newspaper published an account of it. It was the easiest bit of national advertising ever accomplished. And that was before the days of national advertising as we know it. For one thing, there were several hundred thousand men North and South whose old wounds, healed in the pre-antiseptic days, when laudable pus was considered a valuable indication of the healing power of tissues and therefore with much scarring and destruction of substance, inflicted on them especially in rainy weather, discomforts similar to those of the old general. They took up the new cure with avidity so that it is easy to understand that it was not long before blue glass was much in demand. The factory disposed not only of its surplus blue glass stock, but had to manufacture an immense amount more. And other glass foundries throughout the country had to take up the manufacture of blue glass and the demand for it could scarcely be supplied.

I remember an uncle of mine who sat under the blue glass for an hour and more every day and was perfectly sure that nothing in the world had ever done him so much good as the “blue glass cure.” Pains in his back and shoulders that had been bothering him for years and were always worse in rainy weather, disappeared, as if by magic. He persuaded a brother of his, an old

soldier who had been much exposed to rain and dampness during the war and then subsequently in a series of western adventures, to try the glass and he also was very much benefited by it. I remember seeing the glass many years afterwards in a garret in the old homestead and being reminded then of what I had heard about it as a boy. Evidently the cure did not last, for both the uncles continued to complain of rheumatic pains and aches of various kinds that were "cured" by many other things after the blue glass had been given up. One of them particularly wore a steel ring on his left hand, that being the hand nearer the heart and therefore more likely to affect the blood supply, which was supposed to be a source of electricity and which for a time made another magical cure in his case, so that my good uncle bought a whole lot of the rings for friends and relatives, for he was one of those who in Aristotelian phrase believed that good ought to be diffusive of itself.

Of course after a time the fad for blue glass dropped out and now is almost completely forgotten. Blue glass is of no special value for the relief of pains and aches, but for a time it looked as though it were one of the heaven-sent dispensations of relief for the old soldiers whose wounds and exposure during the war had rendered them the subject of so many discomforts. Every one pitied them for their sufferings and yet these disappeared as if by magic under the influence of blue glass, though further experience showed that that had no good effect worth while talking about on human tissues. Actually thousands of them were benefited and their friends and acquaintances who had less patriotic pains and aches, gouty, rheumatic, neuritic, especially

the discomforts of rainy days in old bone breaks and dislocations and amputation wounds, shared in the cures until after a while it was found that blue glass did not cure any more and then they had recourse to the next cure that promised much.

Whether the remedy is applied inside or outside makes absolutely no difference in the history of these cures that have failed. It is not the cure itself that counts but the idea that goes with it, once that gets across. The external appliance can prove to be the height of absurdity when viewed from a subsequent generation, but at the time it makes not the slightest difference and the "cures" go right on being produced. Plaster and rubber, magnets, electric rings and horse chestnuts, blue light and liver pads, what an amusing jumble they make gathered together in the lumber room of the things that were in estimation for healing and are now fallen from their high estate. But do not ridicule overmuch. Some of them may yet be restored to favor—for a while at least. You never can tell about these things. Humanity sometimes goes back to its former loves.

## CHAPTER XII

### MANIPULATION CURES

**P**ROBABLY one of the most astounding experiences is in store for the serious student of humanity who is inclined to think of mankind as reasonably rational, or for any one who takes the time to go over even a few of the pages of medical history and finds how many different manipulations have at various times proved curative for as many different affections. Some of these manipulations have been quite trivial in character. Some of them have partaken of the nature of something that would almost seem to want to remold the body nearer to the heart's desire, but all of them, simple or complex, gentle or rigorous, have at one time or another cured all sorts of ills. Mere touching or gentle stroking has of course always had a place in the history of "cures," and especially of "cures" that have failed, so that we have treated them in a separate chapter on the personal healers who fairly radiated curative influences. Rubbing and massage, passive motion and the encouragement of voluntary activities of various kinds, breathing exercises and muscle adjustment, abdominal setting up and twisting exercises, supermassage and conscious control of various kinds have all proved capable, in particular hands, of curing all sorts of maladies, external and internal and above all of relieving patients who have suffered for long and were sure that their cases were misunderstood

and who have made the rounds to physicians for relief without avail.

**Stroking Cures.**—Many of the forms of supposed physical cures were really in a certain sense manipulation cures, since they involved such touches of the body as attracted attention to a particular part and then led the attention away from it. A great many of the healers have employed touching or stroking. Patients often described the effect of this on them as being a gradual transference of their ill feeling from the point where it had been localized toward other parts with a diffusion and consequent amelioration of the discomfort and then the gradual disappearance of it. When there was pain in the shoulder, for instance, stroking downward caused the pain to descend toward the hand and then gradually into the fingers whence it seemed to pass out through the ends of them. Something of the same thing was true with regard to tractoration. The tractors were always drawn downward and seemed to lead the discomfort with them until after a time, the attention being directed always in the direction in which the tractoration was performed, the discomfort and often the disability seemed to be carried away from its original site and gradually out of the body.

**Dr. Quimby.**—Among the healers by manipulation ought to be counted Dr. Quimby of Portland, Maine, whose work influenced the founder of Christian Science so deeply. He knew his own curative power, but he could not explain it and he felt that there must be something electrical or magnetic about it. He was deeply influenced by a book called "The Philosophy of Electrical Psychology," written by one Dods, a wandering lecturer on magnetism and demonstrator of

animal magnetism or hypnotism. Quimby's favorite mode of cure was to sit close beside the patient and putting his left hand on the bare abdomen rub the head with his right hand, all the time assuring the patient that magnetism was flowing out of his body into his or hers and especially hers. He used to rumple the hair of his lady patients very much and arrangements had to be made so that they should have the opportunity to rearrange their hair after having been in his consultation room. They would sit around doing up their hair and telling each other about their symptoms and about how much Quimby had accomplished for them and about how much better they felt already and how the treatment worked on them.

Occasionally when the affection was obstinate or was located more in the lower limbs, he manipulated these, rubbing them with his hand, always with the other hand on the abdomen, so that the magnetism might flow from one pole of his body, as it were, to the other, through the patient's tissues. They used to describe the curious tingling feelings that they felt flowing through them from his one hand to the other; how much more vivid their feelings became after a while, as the result of the new vitality, which flowed into them. Some of them declared that they felt ever so much warmer after going through this experience than before and some of them pointed to drops of sweat which broke out on their forehead and sometimes on other parts of their body, as a definite demonstration of the fact that there was more body heat being manufactured as a consequence of the magneto-electric phenomena which were occurring in their bodies from contact with the healer. Later on in his experience Quimby gave up entirely these manipula-



tions, but as we shall see in the chapter on mystical healing, felt that he must above all influence the minds of his patients and change their mental attitude toward themselves and their ills. For the generality of people, however, he had the feeling that pure mind cure would not work so effectively as a combination of bodily and mental means, hence the manipulations and the magneto-electric theory that went with them.

**Bone Setters.**—The typical worker of these “cures” all down the centuries has been the so-called “bone setter” or joint adjuster, the dislocation and subluxation expert, whose special powers in the detection of even the slightest irregularities of joints has been invaluable for “curing” of all sorts of disease. Nearly every generation of humanity has had rather extensive experience—not to say expensive—with the “bone setter.” He was usually supposed to be a mortal to whom God or the gods—for there are traces of him also in the olden time of polytheism—had granted the knowledge and power to set the human body right when it was wrong in any way and allow the ordinary current of vital force to flow on undisturbed. The “bone setter” has always fostered the impression that the bones represented in some way the most important part of the body, or at least the framework which enabled the body forces to act properly, and has always emphasized the fact that any maladjustment of the bones was sure to produce serious results not only at the point where the unfortunate bony dislocation or subluxation or malposition actually existed, but also in every other part of the body connected with this, above and below. Very often this beneficent gift of being able to recognize bony disturbances to which the ordinary physician

was utterly blind, was supposed to be hereditary in certain families. The possessor of it had the power conferred on him of recognizing when bones were out of place, even when they looked all right to the best of physicians who might have had long years of experience in dealing with the bony anatomy both as a surgeon and an anatomist. Above all he was gifted with the secret of setting the bones and joints back in place in such a way as always proved curative not only of the particular ill but of many others in the body that came from this bony disturbance. The bone setters were the direct ancestors of the modern manipulators of various kinds whose claims are now more insistently before the public than ever before. Instead of bone setters now we have adjusters of various kinds—osteopaths, chiropractors, naturopaths, chiro-healers, bone handlers of every ilk.

**Curing Crippings.**—They have always cured the pains and aches of humanity particularly, as well as certain of the disabilities and crippings. It is surprising how often inability to use limbs or even to use large trunk muscles without pain is a neurosis or psychoneurosis, that is an hysterical condition. It was the power of the manipulators, bone setters, and adjusters to “cure” the halt and the lame of this kind that gave them their repute and brought them their patients. Whenever such patients were “cured,” their “cure” was sensational because they had walked or moved in a crippled position and now walked straight. Besides, such people are always good advertisers of their “cure” because they like to be in the limelight to attract attention. The bone setters and manipulators were famous for “curing” pains in the back, by setting the spine in

order, and relieving and correcting the effects of sciatica by making the "hip joint" act as it should, but they healed very effectively many other pains and aches by their clairvoyance for disturbed and displaced bone and above all their power to reposit it.

**Educated Psychoneurotics.**—Any one who thinks that these old-fashioned bone setters did not make surprising "cures," even of those who had been halt and lame for years, or that they succeeded in effecting their "cures" only on the ignorant or those who were supposed to be particularly credulous because of lack of proper training, is sadly mistaken. Their "cured" patients came from all classes of the community, from the well-to-do as well as the poor, from the intelligent and the educated as well as the uninformed and the superstitious. I have myself seen an educated man, a college graduate, professor of the classics in a college, walk lame for years as the result of comparatively slight injury from which apparently he recovered completely—as is so often the way in these cases—and then develop subsequently curious *sequelæ* of inability to use muscles and of pains and aches in rainy weather which persisted. He consulted half a dozen good physicians without relief. Two of them were orthopedists by specialty and all were agreed that they could find nothing the matter with him, except that he was no longer using his leg as he ought to. After seven years of lameness he consulted an old bone setter who had acquired a reputation for making marvelous cures. He was completely relieved by the sagacious manipulation, as he felt it must be, of the wise-looking long white-bearded old man, who took his foot in his hand, after having given him a thorough examination, told him that

there was a subluxation in his hip joint, and then set it back and told him that now he would be able to walk, and sure enough he was. This patient traveled over 500 miles to put himself in the hands of the bone setter, and when he returned "cured," after having walked lame for seven years, is it any wonder that he was the nine days' talk of the little town in which he had lived? A veritable miracle seemed to have been worked.

The town actually raised a fund to send two other of their cripples to the same bone setter, but alas they had real bony lesions and not a psychoneurosis, and they came back unbenefited, though one of them felt for a time, so persuasive were the words of the old bone setter, that he was ever so much better than he had been, though no one else could notice the difference. The cured college man continued all his life to believe that he had been a sufferer from one of those mysterious affections with latent symptoms which no one could understand until the infused wisdom of the old bone setter was applied to his case, and then all was clear. He had carried a cane for years; he did not have to do so any more; nor did he walk with the halt which he had had ever since the injury. He was "cured." For any one to tell him that what he had suffered was a mental inhibition preventing him from using his muscles properly, an hysterical brake, a psychoneurotic repression put upon his nervous impulses, until the bone setter, by his impressiveness, enabled him to lift the inhibition and the brake that he had been placing on them and so allowed nervous impulses to flow properly again, would have seemed to him a veritable insult to his intelligence. He was quite sure that a great and really marvelous "cure" had been worked in him and

that the "bone setter" was simply a wonderful channel of infused knowledge of human nature that had fortunately been accorded to mankind in order to cure them of many ills.

**Bone-Setting Evolution.**—But bone setting gradually became entirely too crude for our enlightened time. We had to have something more esoteric and mysterious to appeal to us, with a chance to have a whole new explanation of life and its meaning to "cure" us. Moreover, setting the bones of the legs and arms in order could scarcely be expected to do anything more than "cure" disorders of the arms and legs. It is true that occasionally the ribs were said to be dislocated and their reposition was supposed to work wonderful effects in "curing" affections of internal organs, and sometimes even the bone setter ventured to announce that his work upon the spine was curative of internal disorders. It remained for the end of the nineteenth century to develop a system of bone reposition which could be announced as "curing" everything under the sun and nearly everything else that might be the matter with humanity. The little girl in school defined the spine as a wavy bone in the middle of our backs, with our head sitting on one end of it while we sat on the other. Here was a good complicated basis for all the diseases, and very little was known about it popularly, so bone setting at the end of the nineteenth century became spine setting with wonderful curative results.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The British estimate of Osteopathy and Chiropractic is interesting and practical. *The British Medical Journal*, which is one of the best representatives of medical science in the world, says: "It appears to observers at a distance that Osteopathy and Chiropractic are little more than terminological adaptations of 'bone setting' with the site of operation cleverly transferred from the knee or the ankle where results, if any, can at least be seen, to the backbone where they cannot." The



*Osteopathy*, as the new healing cult through the spine was called, was discovered some fifty years ago by a country physician of Kansas, Dr. Andrew Still. He himself has given a circumstantial account of the discovery. It is an extremely interesting story, but still more amusing. Dr. Still was the son of a sort of Jack-of-all-trades in a country district of Kansas, a man who was a farmer, a miller, something of a mechanical genius, fixing things generally, and, moreover, a doctor for fixing up mankind. His son followed in his father's footsteps, worked on the farm, at the mill, tinkered at the simple machines of those days and rather prided himself on his ability to fix things generally. The "Father of Osteopathy" learned some practical medicine following his father's practice, though from what he tells us as to his father's keeping his nose to the grindstone of work, there must have been mighty little time for this. Early in the sixties he studied medicine in the Kansas City School of Physicians and Surgeons, but when the Civil War broke out he enlisted and went to the front, and never finished his course.

Some bones from an Indian graveyard in the neighborhood had been dug up and he became very interested in these. He learned not only to name each of them on sight, as every medical student ought to be able to do at the end of the first three months in medicine, but he says that he could tell blindfolded every bone and also on which side of the body it belonged. It would probably take about two hours of serious work to enable

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new bone setters, they admit, probably will be just as successful as the old in curing all sorts of vague affections consequent on dreads and unfavorable autosuggestion, but the British medical sientists would prefer not to have them bothering their people. They produce a change in the mind and not in the skeleton of the patient.



anybody who knew even a little anatomy to do this. To a country boy who knew almost nothing else beyond this, this seemed a great achievement.

**Hysteria Cured.**—Very naturally, then, for Dr. Still bones became the most important thing in the body. He knew something about bones so he proceeded to attribute not only all diseases, but also their cure to bones. He called his new mode of healing osteopathy, which I suppose might be translated either "suffering bones" or "bone suffering." Unkind critics have suggested the Anglicization "rotten bones," but the Greek etymology will scarcely stand this translation. His recognition of the supreme value of his theory that the bones of the spine and their malposition or subluxation caused all disease and that adjustment of the spine would cure all disease, came to him when he was asked to see a young woman suffering from "nervous prostration" whom all the doctors in the neighborhood had given up. As soon as he saw her with her head drooping he thought that he recognized at once that there was a partial dislocation of her neck. He lifted her head and stretched her neck and she at once became better.

After this it was perfectly clear to him that all disease that human flesh was heir to could be cured in this same way. Physicians might possibly be inclined to wonder about a "nervous prostration" that came from dislocated neck, but to marvel still more at a dislocated neck that gave only signs of "nervous prostration." Nervous prostration is the term usually employed for some form of psychoneuroses and psychoneuroses are only hysteria. Manifestly here is another hysteria case cured by a suggestion; any suggestion will do it from magnets to the application of cow ordure, provided only

the suggestion works its way into the mind, but here also is the familiar result. The "cure" of the hysteria gives rise to a new mode of therapeutics and a new system of pathology, a new way of explaining disease, indeed almost a new way of explaining the universe. What a wonderful thing hysteria has been all down the centuries and how it has played ducks and drakes with the mind of mankind. It is responsible for more supposed developments in medicine, in diagnosis, in therapeutics, in pathology than you could shake a stick at. It has caused the spilling of more ink and the building of more systems and the spinning of more theories and the inflation of more hypotheses than anything else.

**All Disease Explained.**—But Dr. Still could not keep his secret to himself. Indeed, he knew that he was divinely commissioned—this idea crops out in all his writings—to teach mankind this new wonder of healing and understanding disease. The sole lesion of disease was some interference with the blood or the nerves by subluxation of the vertebrae, that is by slight movements of the bones of the spine which caused a change in the size in the foramina of the vertebrae and consequent interference with the nerves and vessels which came out between the spinal bones. There was practically no other cause for disease but this. Dr. Still's own words must be the authority for this statement. He said in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, January, 1908: "Believing as we do that the mechanical displacement of the bony vertebrae constitutes most of the lesions causing disease." He had said in the *Independent*, in 1905, in an article which the editor of the *Independent* asked me to answer at the time, "At these foramina we find ninety-five per cent or more of the lesions of disease."

By this he meant quite literally all disease and all diseases. Lung fever, as the old man called it, jumbling up together tuberculosis, pleurisy, pneumonia and bronchitis, was due simply to disturbance of the "bony vertebrae" high up in the back. Typhoid fever, dysentery, appendicitis and cancer, as well as everything else in the abdominal region, including all the feminine ills were due simply to malposition of the vertebrae lower down in the back. Headache and brain tumor and meningitis were all due to troubles in the cervical vertebrae, those in the neck. Dr. Still cured himself of headache by swinging his head in a loop of reins when he was driving the plows and he knew that all head troubles could be "cured" in this way.

**Subluxations Missing.**—Almost needless to say these subluxations of which Dr. Still makes so much have never been found by scientific physicians. Many, many thousands of autopsies have been made in which the spinal canal has been opened and the spinal column carefully examined, but nothing has been found to confirm the osteopathic basis of disease. We have studied literally hundreds of thousands of cases of Pott's disease in which, owing to the presence of tuberculosis of the bodies of the vertebrae, slips and subluxations and dislocations of all kinds occur and yet the little patients, for they are usually children, never suffer from the affections, which according to Dr. Still's theory, they should have. In his article in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, Dr. Still said quite frankly: "I do not believe there are such diseases as fever, typhoid, typhus or lung—rheumatism, sciatica, gout, colic, liver disease, croup or any of the present so-called diseases. They do not exist as diseases." When patients suffer it is because their

nerves and vessels are interfered with in their spinal columns and on the way up. This causes them to have lung fever, that is to say, pleurisy, pneumonia or tuberculosis, or leads to their having ulcers in their intestines in which by some chance the typhoid bacillus is always found, or causes them to have liver and—I suppose—also kidney disease and all the rest of the diseases of mankind.

**Plenty of Subluxations; No Disease.**—The sufferers from Pott's disease, tuberculosis of the spine, present the typical conditions for the illustration of the activity of the principle insisted upon by Dr. Still of interference with the nerves that issue from the spinal cords if there is any such phenomenon. As the result of the sapping of the bodies of the vertebrae through the tuberculous disease of the bones, and their slipping in all manner of ways, they present all sorts of deformity of their spinal foramina and yet very few of them suffer from any of these various diseases that should be a consequence of such a state of affairs. They are no more liable to disease than other young folks of the same general condition. Every physician has seen Pott's disease patients who were healthy and hearty, ready to laugh and play whenever the occasion offered and not a few of them, in spite of all sorts of deformities of their spine, lived to good old age. Only the other day I saw a patient past seventy-six with a certain amount of deformity consequent upon Pott's disease and some of them have lived beyond fourscore. Hunchbacks are not at all the sufferers from chronic ills and ever recurrent disease that they ought to be if Dr. Still's theory were correct.

**Cures.**—Of course a lot of people have been cured

by osteopathy, by spinal adjustment, by the correction of subluxations that physicians never see, though we make many thousands of autopsies every year and often pay particular attention to the spine. But then "cures" are easy. Go back over this book and see how anything "cures" everything if only the idea that goes with the "cure" gets into the patient's mind properly. To be "cured" by osteopathy—whenever you have not anything very serious the matter with you, which is the case, of course, in the great majority of instances—all you have to do is to prefer to follow old Dr. Still rather than all the intelligent men that have ever lived and studied disease and health. All you have to do is to believe that Pasteur was a fool and Lister a nincompoop and Koch a charlatan and poor Trudeau a deluded paranoiac who reclined in a particular way in a steamer chair and cured himself by the position he made his back assume, but then made the mistake of thinking that it was air and good food and not the adjustment of his spine which had made the "cure." Of course Trudeau went on and "cured" a lot of other people suffering from tuberculosis by having them take plenty of fresh air and good food, but then that was all part of his original delusion and any one who is a follower of Dr. Still and of osteopathy will just know that it was too bad that Trudeau fooled himself this way instead of seeing the light of the new revelation from on High which came to Dr. Still in Kansas while he was studying bones from an Indian graveyard.

**Divine Commission.**—What is most interesting about Dr. Still, however, is his abiding sense of having a mission from on High. He is quite sure that he is the only one who has ever properly understood God's work



in the human body. Over and over again in the talks that he gave to his medical school students, he emphasized this fact of his special mission. It was God's work that he was doing. It brought him persecution and misunderstanding, but he did not mind that so long as he had the confidence that Providence was with him and that the Deity had revealed to him the basis of his great new understanding of disease and its cure. He appeals to God and to Providence rather than to the foolish men who have been pretending to understand all about the human body and who have always made such a mess of things until *he* came to simplify everything and make it perfectly clear how extremely easy was the solution of the whole problem of life and health and disease and cure.

**Drugs and Sin.**—He knows it all. It has been revealed to him from on High. To give drugs for fever or for any other disease is to go counter to the design of Providence. "To administer drugs is to accuse God of incapacity." "You may be sure the Divine intelligence failed not to put into the machine of man a lever by which to control fever." Dr. Still then tells of how he saw four physicians "battle with all their skill against the dread disease of cerebrospinal meningitis in my family. . . . The war between life and death was a fierce one, but at the close of it three lifeless bodies lay in my desolate home." It was while laboring under the stress of a family catastrophe of this kind that Dr. Still was inspired with the discovery of osteopathy. As he says himself:

"In my grief the thought came to me that Deity did not give life simply for the purpose of so soon destroying it—such a Deity would be nothing short of a murderer.



I was convinced there was something surer and stronger with which to fight sickness than drugs, and I vowed to search until I found it.

"The result was that, in 1874, I raised the flag of Osteopathy, claiming that 'God is God, and the machinery He put in man is perfect.'"

**Dr. Still and Mrs. Eddy.**—For any one to say that he had a serious ill of any kind is as great a mistake, according to Dr. Still, as for Mrs. Eddy to say such a thing. All disease is an error of mortal mind for the founder of Christian Science and could not have come from God, Who is all good, and Mrs. Eddy insists that God is truth. Dr. Still says that he was the first to teach this. Here are his own words for it:

"This is the first school which ever raised the flag on the globe, as far as history says, that God is Truth, and this can be proven. I can take His works and prove His perfection; and he who takes his good old whisky and drugs, and says God is Perfection, is a liar. He who has lung fever, pneumonia, flux, or any fever, and drinks his whisky, denies the whole idea of the perfection of God. He slaps it in the face, and not only that, but in effect says, God is a failure."

**God and Osteopathy.**—There has been a definite tendency among osteopaths since the old man's death to broaden the scope of osteopathy and above all to get away from the spinal cord and the spinal column as the source and the cure of all disease. Dr. Still himself was very emphatic about this. He said in one of his addresses, "I will demonstrate to you that the spinal cord supplies all other parts. It is that which supplies life to the whole machine." (He then had the lights turned out as a demonstration of how paralysis occurs and then

had the lights turned on as a demonstration of the way osteopathy worked.) He had said in the course of a preceding address: "In case of paralysis you go from one doctor to another to find one who can throw the current of life on the spinal cord. . . . The principle of the electric light is the same as osteopathy. . . . Turn on the vitality, as God directs, and don't make your patient drunk." He then goes on:

"In case of flux, when the bowels are on fire with pain, an Osteopath presses the button of ease, and in a few minutes the agony is over and the child is hungry.

"Shame on the knife that cuts a woman like a Christmas hog. Almost one-half the women of to-day bear a knife-mark, and I tell you, God's intelligence is reproached by it.

"An Osteopath stands firm in the belief that God knew what to arm the world with, and follows His principles. And he who so far forgets God's teachings as to use drugs, forfeits the respect of this school and its teachings.

"God is the Father of Osteopathy, and I am not ashamed of the child of His mind." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Any one who wants to know Dr. Still and to appreciate osteopathy properly because at the fountain head, ought to read his volume *Autobiography With a History of the Discovery and Development of the Science of Osteopathy* published by himself at Kirksville in 1898. No more interesting book for a physician, especially if he is interested in nervous and mental disease, has been written in recent years. Besides the sketch of his life he gives a series of addresses and lectures delivered before the American School of Osteopathy, during what he calls the progress of the discovery. It contains a number of most amusing expressions and illustrates very well what a very strong mystical element there was in Dr. Still's work. The dear old man was firmly persuaded, even utterly convinced that he was divinely appointed to carry the message to mankind that they had been given by God an absolutely perfect machine in their bodies and only their own foolish beliefs and misconceptions ever led them to think that there could be anything wrong with it. He said in an address delivered in June, 1895: "Twenty-two years ago I took up the matter solemnly and seriously. Since that time I have not lost a wakeful hour without my mind being engaged with the construction of man, to

Chiropractic is only osteopathy under another name. Both the osteopaths and the chiropractors insist that there are differences, but none that can be discovered by any ordinary intelligence. What B. F. Palmer, the founder of Chiropractic, emphasized as the foundation of his theory of therapeutics or cures for the ills of mankind was, "that all disease results from the pressure upon the nerves as they leave the spinal canal. This pressure is produced by the vertebrae which have become somewhat displaced. This displacement is spoken of as a subluxation of the vertebrae. These subluxations may be so slight that they cannot be detected by the x-rays. When detected and reduced by the special chiropractic method of treatment, health will result." How easy it all is. Just adjust the vertebrae and then all will be well. Dear old Dr. Still, down in Kansas, had suggested that ninety-five per cent of

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see if I could detect one single flaw or defect in it—either under the microscope, or with the anatomist's knife, or the rules of philosophy of my own or the minds of others. I have never yet been able to detect the least shadow of confusion." (Dr. Still has a habit of mixing up his pronouns in a way that is an infallible index to his education, but it is too flagrant to need to have attention called to it, except in general, and too funny as a rule to spoil it by any attempt at correction.)

Osteopathy was the only thing needed to keep this flawless machine of ours going properly. "Stick to osteopathy," he said to his students. "Always bear in mind that osteopathy will do the work, if properly applied. That all else is unnatural, unreasonable and is therefore wrong and should not be entertained by the student or diplomat" (meaning by this curious term a man who has received a diploma from his school) "who has the brain to grasp in all its fullness the most advanced and progressive science of the nineteenth century." And then in one of these perorations that evidently used to stir his osteopathic graduates and their friends to the depth of their being and prepare for the old doctor's exit from the platform with cheers, he said:

"Let your light so shine before men that the world will know you are an Osteopath pure and simple, and that no prouder title can follow a human name. Stand by the 'old flag' of Osteopathy, on whose fluttering folds are emblazoned in letters of glittering gold: 'One science, one Lord, one faith and one baptism.'"

the ills of humanity are due to "slips or subluxations of the vertebrae." He thought that some of the trouble was due to interference with the blood supply. Palmer is sure, however, that *all* the diseases of mankind are due to pressure upon the nerves that come out from the spinal canal between the vertebrae. We have already suggested how much patients with Pott's disease ought to suffer from ills of all kinds if that principle were true, and they do not suffer but are often rather healthy mortals. However, a little thing like that makes no difference in a great system of healing.

The only thing that the founder of chiropractic invented was the name. Chiropractic is the Greek term for practice with the hand. George Eliot said, nearly a century ago, "We like to map out our ignorance in long Greek names." While taking a course down in Kansas with old Dr. Still, Palmer seems to have realized all the possibilities there were for *teaching* healing by adjustment, without any necessity for any knowledge of the sciences relating to the human body. The osteopaths at least insist on giving their students some very definite knowledge of the sciences that are usually studied by medical students, but after all what is the use of all this if all you have to know is how to adjust the spine? The new school soon attracted a great many students. It took only a comparatively short time to take a course and whenever business was dull, or there was not much doing on the farm, a man might take a few months off and secure his diploma in the new profession. After that he might go out and heal any one that came along of anything that might be the matter. All disease was due to subluxations of the vertebrae. Liver and lung and kidney and heart disease were only

terms to describe the symptoms produced by pressure upon the spinal nerves, and typhoid and dysentery and diphtheria and smallpox and all the rest, only manifestations of the same thing; so adjust the spinal column, collect your fee and be perfectly confident that the patient will get well.

The chiropractors themselves have been very much occupied with the thought of making their system appear more elaborate than it really is. It is not hard to do this; all you need is words, words, words, and I do not know that there has ever been a better example of how words can be used to conceal thought, to use Talleyrand's expression, than in the definition of chiropractic formulated by the apostles of the cult themselves, for the New Jersey legislature, when they were endeavoring to secure the passage of a law permitting them to practice in that state. Practice with the hands, Chiropractic, is lifted up into a new explanation of the universe and a new order of theology, biology, psychology and nearly every other ology just to give it an ambitious place.

"The term chiropractic when used in this act shall be construed to mean and be the name given to the study and application of a universal philosophy of biology, theology, theosophy, health, disease, death, the science of the cause of disease and art of permitting the restoration of the triune relationship between all attributes necessary to normal composite forms, to harmonious quantities and qualities by placing in juxtaposition the abnormal concrete positions of definite mechanical portions with each other by hand, thus correcting all subluxations of the articulations of the spinal column, for the purpose of permitting the re-creation of all normal cyclic currents through nerves that were



formerly not permitted to be transmitted, through impingement, but have now assumed their normal size and capacity for conduction as they emanate through intervertebral foramina—the expressions of which they were formerly excessive or partially lacking—named disease.”

Honestly? Does not that just take the cake for highfalutin twaddle? A single very simple idea padded out so as to drag in the universe and everything else besides.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> A briefer definition of chiropractic is to be found in the advertisements in *Life*. There seems a distinct appropriateness to find it in a comic paper. It runs: “The practice of chiropractic consists of the adjustment by the hands of the movable segments of the spinal column to normal position for the purpose of releasing the prisoned impulse.” The advertisement suggests that “chiropractic is a demonstrable science. It is the most efficient method of getting the sick well.” The joke is on *Life*, whose spleen against regular physicians is a heritage from its crank founder, that the chiropractors, knowing the paper’s attitude, should pick that periodical out as a favorable medium for publicity with regard to their cult. *Life* has been creating the clientèle by anticipation, fertilizing the soil by the repetitious humor of reactionary misunderstanding of scientific medicine.



## CHAPTER XIII

### MYSTICAL CURES

**M**OST of the cures that have numbered their successes by the thousands in the time of their flourishing have had something mystical about them. That is to say, there has been something mysterious either from the side of religion or of science or of self connected with them that has had a deep appeal to human nature and impressed people very profoundly. This extends beyond the realm of ideas into that of apparently the most physical cures. Any one who reads the autobiography of the founder of osteopathy will realize very readily that he was a profound mystic in his belief in himself and the revelation to him of the way to cure mankind. All of these mystical cures have been typically superstitious. Superstition, according to the etymology of the word, is something that stands over us and impresses us so deeply that it has a definite tendency to keep us from reasoning about it, a tendency which very often becomes an actuality.

Superstitions have usually been supposed to be intimately and almost necessarily connected with religion, but we find that there is no such limitation as that when we study the influence of superstition in medicine all down the centuries. Science, quite contrary to the usual assumption in the matter, has very often been the source of superstitions. The very first science that

developed was what we now call astronomy, but what used to be called astrology, that is "the ordered account of the stars." The reason for the change in the name is very interesting. Astrology is really the proper name for the science, as is clear from the other words of the same kind, geology, anthropology, ethnology, and the rest. When modern science was ordering its house, however, it was found that old-fashioned astrology had become so mixed up with superstitions of various kinds connecting the positions of the stars with human events and human ills that the students of this science preferred to adopt a new word, astronomy (literally, "star law"), in order to get away from all the innuendoes of superstition connected with the original word. They were too much of a burden for the new science to carry.

Much more modern sciences, however, have proved the origins of superstitions just as well as the oldest of the sciences. The science of electricity, for instance, has given rise to any number of medical superstitions of supposed power to cure. Magnets and batteries as well as pseudo-electrical apparatus of all kinds, belts and medals, etc., have proved curative when properly energized by scientific explanations. Now psychology is taking the place of electricity as the source of therapeutic superstitions and is accomplishing quite as interesting results with quite as trifling elements.

**Mysteries in Healing.**—In the great majority of cases, however, the superstitions which prove effective in the cure of disease have something to do with the mystical, that is, some relation to the mysteries surrounding us, life, death, immortality, the existence of spirits and of our own continued existence after death. Some of the cures effected in this way have already

been discussed. When Greatrakes, in the generation after Harvey, cured a lot of people in Ireland, and then a still larger number in England, of all sorts of diseases, he did so because he had a commission from on High to touch people and cure them. He had dreamed that this commission was accorded to him three nights in succession and any one who has ever lived in Ireland for any length of time knows very well that whenever you dream about anything three nights in succession, it is sure to be so. In more modern times, even in our own twentieth century, Alexander Dowie, representing himself as Elijah returned to earth and divinely commissioned to prepare the way for the Saviour to come by touching and healing people, "cured" many thousands of ailing persons—of all places in the world, around Chicago. Francis Schlatter still later accomplished the same thing just because he announced that he was sent to do this, and once people believed in his mission, it is easy to understand how readily they were "cured" and that many people whom the physicians had failed to help found entire relief under the healing ministrations of the hermit-faster of the mountain of the Holy Cross who, having fasted forty days, came down into Denver and demonstrated his healing power.

Besides these personal healers, however, whose work illustrates very well the mystical element in healing, we have had a series of definite movements, usually in a quasi-religious line, which have proved the source of healing powers that enabled a great many people to get over ills that had lasted sometimes for years and not infrequently had puzzled physicians. One of the most striking of these movements in America was that called spiritualism. One phase of it has already been dis-

cussed in the chapter on Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of Poughkeepsie, who, having had a long consultation with the spirit of Galen, the great Greek physician who practiced so successfully at Rome at the height of the imperial power, and with Swedenborg, the great Swedish mystic, was enabled to understand all disease and to prescribe for it successfully. In spite of the ominous location of the conference—it was in a graveyard—Davis was granted Swedenborg's vision and power of diagnosis and Galen's ability to know just what to prescribe for the ills of mankind, so that no wonder all those who consulted him were ever so much benefited by his ministrations. Almost needless to say, the good Seer of Poughkeepsie made a lot of money, but then see the lot of people that he "cured" and then read his wonderful *Harmonial Philosophy* which educated people read more than any other serious book in his time, and it is not difficult to comprehend that the healer is worthy of his hire.

**Spiritistic Healing.**—It is easy to understand that those who believed in the mediumistic powers of certain people and their direct communication with another world than this, would find it not hard to be convinced that such persons might possess marvelous secrets for the cure of disease. After all it was only a question of a medium getting in communication with some of the old famous physicians whose knowledge of medicine, great as it was here on earth, had been sublimated, increased, refined and extended by their experience in the spirit world. If the medium, then, could obtain a prescription or definite directions from the physician in the spirit world, what merely terrestrial physician could be expected to rival such knowledge and such quite

supernatural experience. Spiritualistic healing, then, very naturally became a lucrative sideline with the spirit-rapping mediums and other go-betweens from this world to the other. They not only brought consolation to sorrowing hearts who had lost dear ones, but the dear ones in the other world, interesting themselves in the concern of the friends whom they had left behind, consulted great physicians of the spirit world and sent on messages of healing that would make their terrestrial friends happier and enable them to put off their suffering and live life on a higher level, until the time would come for them to pass away to another and a happier world than this, where there was no more disease, no more suffering and no more death.

**Dr. Conan Doyle's Spirit Helpers.**—When Sir Conan Doyle lectured to us in this country on his personal experience with spiritism, he told us a story that illustrates spiritistic healing powers or spiritualistic medical communication very thoroughly. His sister-in-law, his brother's widow, was ailing severely, though Sir Conan Doyle himself knew nothing of that. A communication came from his dead brother, through a medium, telling him of this illness and suggesting that for her cure she must consult a particular healer or else she would not get better. This healer was, I believe, a man famous for making "cures" by certain magnetic powers that he possessed. And sure enough, when Sir Conan Doyle's sister-in-law went to him, she, too, like so many others, was "cured." We physicians with our merely mundane powers, would be interested in knowing just what was the matter with the lady who was cured by the magnetism of a healer for personal magnetism is only suggestion. Sir Conan Doyle, how-



ever, has set the incident down as a definite demonstration of the truth of communications from the spirit world and of the marvelous knowledge which they possess over there.

**Mediums and Healers.**—Modern Spiritism began in this country with the rappings heard by the Fox family in the little town of Hidesville near Rochester, N. Y. These rappings were demonstrated, after a time, to be due to slight dislocations and repositions of bones which many people are able to make with a definite sound that resembles closely the knock of a gloved hand on a piece of board. A committee of physicians who investigated the Fox sisters were quite sure that this was the explanation of the rappings. A number of physicians showed just how such rapping could be made. Later on in life the Fox sisters confessed that this was the way that they produced the so-called spirit rappings. Later, I believe, they retracted this confession, because they found it extremely difficult to make a living amid the opposition of their former spiritualistic friends, while when they retracted their confession they at once became the center of such interest and attention as made life once more a bed of roses. Meantime, however, the practice of spirit rapping spread all over the United States and with it went practically always the movement of spiritual healing through prescriptions from great doctors on the other shore or else from specific directions to go to certain earthly healers to be cured—it being understood of course that a definite percentage of the receipts thus obtained by the healer were to be paid over later on to the medium who had recommended the patients to go to be healed.

A series of exposures of mediums gradually destroyed



faith in spiritualistic healing. About 1880, one of the great New York newspapers did not hesitate to declare that there was not a single medium in the active practice of his or her profession who had not been caught tricking in some way and exposed. Naturally faith was lost in the curative powers of any prescription or recommendation obtained from men and women who had been caught counterfeiting in one way or another. Spiritualistic healing gradually went out, then, but not before many thousands of people in many different parts of the country had been cured of ills which baffled their physicians and which had caused suffering for months and sometimes even for years without any real relief. They were spiritistically healed so that their ailments dropped from them as if by the power of heaven itself. Indeed for a considerable time these wonders of healing were looked upon as one of the strongest proofs of the reality of spirit communications and of the absolute truth of spiritualism. Unfortunately after a time it became very clear from the curious tricks of the seance room that if there was any communication with the spirit world it was surely not with the spirits of the blessed, nor the good, but with others who represented not the well wishers but the ill wishers of mankind.

**Angels or Demons.**—Hawthorne, the most spiritual minded of our American writers, looked on with interest at first and then with an inevitable revulsion of feeling as time wore on and the manifest counterfeits and crudities of all kinds came into the spiritualistic movement. When he came to write the *Blythedale Romance*, just about the time of the early climax of interest in spiritualism in the early fifties, he had become completely disillusioned. What he wrote as a consequence

is worthwhile recalling and keeping in mind as the evidence of a contemporary who was one of the best fitted of his time to judge of the significance of the movement. He said:

“Alas! methinks we have fallen on an evil age! If these phenomena have not humbug at the bottom, so much the worse for us. What can they indicate in a spiritual way, except that the soul of man is descending to a lower point than it has ever reached while incarnate? We are pursuing a downward course in the eternal march, and thus bring ourselves into the same range with beings whom death—in requital of their gross and evil lives—has degraded below humanity. To hold intercourse with spirits of this order, we must stoop and grovel in some elements more vile than earthly dust. These goblins, if they exist at all, are but the shadows of past mortality—mere refuse stuff, adjudged unworthy of the eternal world, and as the most favorable supposition, dwindling gradually into nothingness. The less we have to say to them, the better, lest we share their fate.”

No wonder then that the spiritualistic cures failed. Men and women lost faith in the movement and then no favorable suggestions could come from it. The later revival of interest brought more cures in its train as that we have quoted from Sir Conan Doyle illustrates, but spiritualism is declining once more in interest and of course in curative power.

**A National Matter.**—When interest in spiritualism was at its height in this country in 1854, a petition was sent to Congress bearing some 15,000 signatures, the great majority of them from thoroughly educated or at least well-informed people asking for a formal investigation of the claims of spiritualism by the Federal

government, confident that they could thus obtain a sort of formal, or at least quasi-official recognition of their wonderful new movement. This petition was presented to the Senate of the United States in executive session by Senator Shields of Illinois, a man, be it recalled, who had the distinction of representing no less than three different states in the Senate of the United States and who won for himself great prestige during the Civil War and was made a Major General. He could not forbear to let his Irish wit and humor play around the idea of the cures that had been worked by spiritualism. He reminded the Senate of Cornelius Agrippa who in the Renaissance time had his familiar spirits who helped him to cure all sorts of ills and Dr. Dee, whose spiritualistic healing powers brought him fame and fortune in London in Elizabeth's time and of Cagliostro, the greatest of charlatans, who cured all sorts of people, but especially the nobility of three or four countries of Europe, of all sorts of things that their doctors could not cure. Cagliostro sold beds that guaranteed painless childbirth and chairs that cured rheumatism and he had an elixir of life far ahead of the monkey glands and he made money and secured publicity and was one of the most successful impostors of all time. Senator Shields laughed the petition of the spiritualists out of the Senate, and so we were rescued from having spiritualistic healing foisted on us as a national institution.

**Further Mystic Cures.**—It might be expected that after a disillusionment of this kind with regard to spiritualism and the "cures" effected by it that humanity here in America would be quite immune, for at least a generation, to any further tendencies to accept mystical

healing of this kind. So far from this being the case, however, the spiritualistic experience seems rather to have prepared our people for a whole series of further developments in mystical healing. The consequence is that for the past forty years we have had a series of mystical cures which have simply worked wonders amongst believers in them. The people thus "cured" have not been the ignorant nor the particularly superstitious, but have been more especially those who had had the advantage of education, sometimes in its higher form, nearly always the well-to-do who felt themselves distinctly above the common mass of mankind. Most of them indeed have had the complacent feeling that it was their very powers of understanding on a higher plane than those around them which enabled them to be affected properly by the new system of healing and afforded them the blessing of being able to get well by mystical means, after they had been so many years ill.

The beginning of our greatest mystical healing movements here in America center around the name of a man who himself proved to be a successful healer, but who has a still greater claim to fame as the direct source of two great streams of healing which outlived him and are still accomplishing "cures" in our midst. This healer was Dr. Phineas Quimby, though there is very grave doubt as to whether the title of doctor was accorded to him by anything more than courtesy—the courtesy of his disciples and adherents. He was a man very much like Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of Poughkeepsie, who became convinced that he had quite supernatural powers for the healing of mankind. At first in his ignorance, as he later confessed, he thought that this power of healing was due to personal mag-

netism and so he used to put one hand on the naked abdomen of his patients, most of whom were women, and rubbing the affected part, whatever it might be, with the other, naturally came to be very sure that the cures which so often followed his ministrations must be due to a current of vital or magnetic energy which flowed from one hand to another and carried out of the body of the patients the ill, whatever it was, that might be the matter with them.

After a time, however, Quimby came to realize that he did not have to go through this manipulation to cure his patients. All he had to do was to persuade them that there was really no such thing as evil in the world. God was entirely too good to have permitted anything like evil to exist. It was only men themselves, who by thinking evil made themselves ill. When they dropped this very uncomfortable idea, then their illness dropped from them. In a word, Quimby went through very nearly the same phases of thought as Pfarrer Gassner in the eighteenth century at Elwangen. Pfarrer Gassner had seen Professor Hell curing people with magnets in Vienna and he had carried home a set of these magnets and made many cures with them, until after a time he found that he did not have to use the magnets. All he had to do was to make people understand that they must give up the Evil One with all his works and pomps and then their illness would drop from them.

Quimby, as we have said, went through the phase of animal magnetism, or personal magnetism and the supposed necessity for manipulations, but found after a time that a pure mind cure with persuasion that brought conviction of the lack of the existence of evil, cured people very effectively. Above all he made it very clear



to them that they must put themselves in touch with the infinite and allow the health giving forces of God to flow through them and then all would be well. These health forces are all around us, but unfortunately we keep them out or make them very ineffective by our dreads and fear thoughts and the inhibitions and brakes which we set up against them and which prevent them from benefiting us as they otherwise would.

This phase of Quimbyism came to be the father of New Thought and New Thought has continued to be, ever since, a marvelously effective mode of treatment. so its adherents proclaim, for a great many of the ills of mankind. It has had many more adherents in New England than anywhere else, but it has had them there by the thousands. It is a true cult founded on the belief of a gift of higher understanding of God and his ways than is vouchsafed to the ordinary run of mortals. The books of their leaders—high priests of the cult as it were—have sold as best sellers for years and there have been definite groups in many of the towns who have met together in true church fashion and helped each other to get over the ills that came to them because of their lack of trust in the beneficent infinite powers around them and their own unfortunate tendencies to think always the worst.

Magazines have been published for the adherents of the new cult and these have been widely circulated and there are literally many thousands of people in this country who are sure that they owe their health and strength and the disappearance of many symptoms which had been disturbing them seriously for years and which physicians had been unable to relieve, to the marvelous powers generated in humanity by thoroughgoing



belief in New Thought and by putting one's self "in tune with the infinite" and believing that the universe is good and not ill and that all we have to do is to take advantage of that and be well. This comfortable optimism has added notably to the happiness of mankind, prevented a deal of suffering and made many chronic invalids happy workers in the cause of New Thought and the promotion of good healthmaking cures, cures! cures! !

Quimby's teaching had another and much more far-reaching effect, however. Mrs. Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, was a sufferer from "spinal nervousness" as the result of a fall. That is a very interesting diagnosis that may mean almost anything, or everything, or next to nothing. Years ago we used to hear a good deal about "railway spine" when people were shaken up in a railroad accident and showed no external injury but suffered from various nervous symptoms afterwards. They nearly always got well very shortly after the jury had awarded them properly therapeutic damages. Traumatic neurosis is just a form of hysteria as a rule. Several physicians at least had failed to do Mrs. Eddy any good and she made the rather long journey for those days, to Portland, in order to consult Dr. Quimby. From the very beginning he benefited her and it was not long before she felt herself almost completely well, though she had to go back several times in order to corroborate her cure. She adopted Quimby's principles of the non-existence of evil, but after a time adapted her teaching so as to make it much more mystical and therefore secure it a more far-reaching appeal. Quimby had taught that "every disease is the invention of man and has no identity in wisdom; but to those who

believe it, it is a truth." Quimby had reached this conclusion from his observations as a healer. At the beginning of his healing work he was convinced of the physical reality of disease and hence was ready to declare that his power to heal was due to magnetism.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Quimby's ultimate conclusion after years of practice was: "I know from my own experience with the sick that their troubles are the effect of their own beliefs." It is easy to understand that if this was the sort of patients that he had, no wonder his method of just telling them that if they believed differently they would be well, gave him a great reputation among those who were ready to accept his teaching. This is the pregnant formula from which was born New Thought and Eddyism.

Mrs. Eddy simply declared quite positively after her personal experience and rather intimate association with Quimby that "disease is an error of mortal mind" and has no existence outside of the mind. Her basic doctrine is "that error, sin, sickness, disease, death—the opposite of truth—is the false testimony of false material sense—of life in matter." Her fundamental aph-

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Eddy never succeeded in getting quite away from the ideas of magnetism which Quimby first admitted and then rejected. She insisted that her cures were not due to magnetism but she continued to be quite sure for most of her long life that malicious animal magnetism was productive of many ills to her. She once even instituted a suit to enjoin people from using malicious animal magnetism on her, or having them punished for so doing. This malicious animal magnetism would be exactly the old witchcraft, so familiar in the vicinity where Mrs. Eddy lived, by which people who hated others might do them bodily harm by wishing them that harm very strongly or by doing some overt act that would transfer itself to the hated one at a distance and work injury. Mrs. Eddy's absent treatment is a phase of beneficent animal magnetism in the same way, but of course this is denied by the followers of the cult. Absent treatment and distance cures are, as we have seen in a preceding chapter, rather common experiences among mankind, so that there is little that is in any way novel about this new cult.

orism is "Mind is all and matter naught." She states very frankly and very straightforwardly as a consequence of this: "Man is never sick; for mind is not sick; and matter cannot be. False belief is both the tempter and the tempted, the sin and the sinner, the disease and its cure." "The cure of disease is effected by making the disease appear to be—what it really is—an illusion."

For those who have that sort of a disease it is easy to understand that this sort of teaching is eminently curative, because it enables people to get rid of their illusions. To accept that teaching all one has to do is to believe that matter has no real existence. Mrs. Eddy declared this over and over again. "Matter is an error of statement"; "Matter is unreal and is therefore a belief"; "to spirit there is no matter"; "science repudiates matter" (meaning of course her own science); "science shows that what is termed matter is but the subjective state of mortal mind"; "matter is a fiction"; "the first idolatry was belief in matter"; "admit the existence of matter and we admit that mortality (and therefore disease and presumedly also death) has a foundation in fact." The very bones are emphatically and repeatedly declared to be without substance. "Bones are only an appearance; bones are a subjective state of mortal mind; bones have only the substantiality of thought."

Her position is very well illustrated by her answers to questions put to her by her disciples. When asked by a sufferer if her toothache was not a reality Mrs. Eddy replied, quite in accordance with her principles: "What you thought was pain in the bone or nerve could only have been a belief of pain in matter, for matter has no sensation. Your toothache was a state of mortal thought made manifest in the flesh." When asked the

almost more seriously posing question as to whether excess weight in a lady might not be considered to be a reality, to be removed therefore by physical means, Mrs. Eddy replied that the inquirer would be cured of her adiposity "by learning that matter is but manifest mortal mind." She added that it was important for her disciple—not patient of course—to realize very thoroughly that, "you entertain an adipose belief of yourself as substance."

This philosophy with regard to matter as non-existent or as only being a name that we have given to our own thoughts with regard to things outside of us, and even things inside of us apart from our mind, is not new but has been in existence for several thousand years. Some of the Greek philosophers were caught by it. Even here in America it was very old when Mrs. Eddy advanced it once more. That very interesting Irish born English philosopher, Bishop Berkeley, who came to this country in the seventeenth century and stayed a while among the colonists of Rhode Island, was a confirmed teacher of very similar doctrines. He taught "that all the qualities of matter, primary as well as secondary, resolve themselves into mind dependent phenomena." It has been said of him that he demonstrated to his own satisfaction at least, his own non-existence, except in his own mind. It is no wonder that tar water, as we have seen, could cure anything and everything that was the matter with Bishop Berkeley for he believed that he had no matter about him. It so happened, however, that once when he was at a garden party a bull, belonging to his host, rather famous in the neighborhood for its fierceness, broke into the enclosure where the guests were assembled. The good Bishop

was noted as one of the first to seek and find shelter in the house. He might believe philosophically and be ready to teach others his material non-existence, but as a wag of the time commented, he was very anxious not to have that material non-existence gored by the horns of a bull. The same inconsistency of action has been noted in modern followers of Bishop Berkeley's nominalistic idealism.

All one has to do to be cured by Christian Science, then, is to accept these pronouncements of Mrs. Eddy that you have nothing the matter with you and can have nothing the matter with you, because you have no matter about you, except what is created by your own mind and there is no matter in reality and so whatever you may have thought was the matter with you very naturally disappears. There is no doubt at all that this teaching has cured a great many people. We have seen now what "cures" mean in the history of humanity. Anything, quite literally anything will "cure" a whole lot of people of a great many different kinds of ills, at least they are quite sure that they are different, provided only it makes an alteration in their state of mind. The less there is in the "cure" itself, provided people once become persuaded that there is something in it that will "cure" them, the more successfully the "cure" works.

There is no doubt at all that Mrs. Eddy's teaching has accomplished an immense amount of good for a great many people. These people needed a definite change of their attitude of mind toward themselves and their ills, and then their ills promptly disappeared. This does not mean at all that their ills were imaginary, but their physical affections were extremely unimportant compared to the exaggerated significance their own solic-



itude was giving to them. Without this change of mind nothing could possibly have cured them. There are an immense number of such patients who need to be "cured" in some such way as this.

But these "cures" constitute no reason why men and women should give up their power of thinking and believe that this sort of thing cures cancer and tuberculosis and pneumonia and Bright's disease and all the rest of the organic diseases. What is needed is a recognition of the distinction between organic affections consequent upon definite changes in tissues, and functional disturbances which are almost entirely due to the mind dwelling too much on whatever condition may be present and thus interfering with the natural functions and multiplying the discomfort, until what is often nothing more than a physiological sensation becomes to the mind a positive torment, or at least a serious discomfort that prevents proper occupation and thus sets up a vicious circle of further preoccupation with self that brings about a progressive exacerbation of the symptoms.

What Eddyism "cures" particularly is the fears and dreads of mankind which make people sure that they are suffering from something serious when they have either very little, or perhaps even nothing the matter with them. As a great newspaper said the morning after Mrs. Eddy's death, "The greatest debt that humanity owes to Mrs. Eddy is that she has shown it that it need not be afraid of fear. Half of men's activities are devoted to taking precautions against fear—fear of sickness and death, fear of sorrow and want, fear of man's inhumanity to man." Another important newspaper in its editorial columns said that it was Mrs. Eddy's beneficent influence which had turned men's



minds from viewing the evils of life to contemplating the good things. The editor added: "Brooding on the ills of life is a sin and this wholesome doctrine has remade chronic grumblers and fretful invalids loaded down under a burden of imaginary ills into bright, active and helpful men and women."

Mystical "cures" invade the domain of religion in various ways and some of them exemplify very interestingly and amusingly the same principles as apply to the "cures" of all kinds that we have been studying. Nearly thirty years ago I visited Knock in the west of Ireland after the wave of intense interest in which the little town was caught up some years before, as the result of a reported apparition at the church, had almost entirely passed away. A great many "cures" had been worked at Knock. I had known many people who actually made the long trip from America over to Ireland in the hope that they might be "cured" there. I knew many others who felt that it was a great sacrifice that they could not go to that place of wonders and be healed by the manifestation of divine power which, they were sure, was shown there. When I got to Knock the place was falling to decay. There was a convent partly built, but destined never to be finished, whose bare beams made a desolate picture against the gray Irish sky, there were some cabins unoccupied and falling to ruins, which showed a decrease in population, and then there was the little church on the rear wall of which an apparition had been seen by some children first, I believe, and then by some women. As might be expected, it was not long before "cures" began and then the good Irish folk, rather susceptible to religious impulses, commenced to flock to Knock and to bring their ailing folk until the

fame of Knock went all over the world wherever the Irish had gone and was known particularly here in America. Even in Australia the people yielded to the temptation to go and try to find healing in the dear old land.

Some found the "cure" they expected, but many did not. The original plaster on the wall on which the apparition was seen was very old and soon disappeared, crumbling under the hands of curio seekers or still oftener people who wanted to bring something associated with the wonders of Knock to their sick folks at a distance. I remember seeing some of this plaster here in this country, being struck by the administration of it to the ailing. A very small portion of it would be rubbed fine and stirred up in a glass of water to be given to the sick who felt that it was sure to do them good and could surely not do them any harm. Not a few of those who took this mixture attributed betterment of their condition to this plastery infusion. When the first coat of plaster had disappeared from the church another was placed thereon, and that too disappeared and in spite of rather careful precautions, I believe that even a third coat had to be given, so sedulous were visitors in breaking off pieces of it, to be taken, as valued souvenirs or precious material by which the curative power might be transferred to a distance.

An old priest of the neighborhood who was a relative of the family told me a little later that after a time the plaster was guarded so carefully that it was almost impossible to get an actual piece of it, the clergy of the church very naturally objecting to the expense of replastering. American visitors, however, wanted pieces of the plaster to take home with them so badly that quite

a trade in substitute plaster grew up and there were regular channels through which it could be obtained, for a due consideration, of course. It was what would now be described as bootlegging in church plaster.<sup>2</sup>

Fortunately only the tiniest portion of the plaster needed to be given to each of the patients, such was the confidence in it. There were so many demands for it that otherwise it would not have gone around. This was fortunate in another way, too, since only a minute fragment was employed and the swallowing of it could do no harm, but might just be looked upon as a small bit of that peck of dirt which all of us have to eat before we die. The "cures" that were effected were very interesting. They consisted particularly of a great many stomach diseases, the chronic indigestions that we are so likely now to call nervous indigestion. They were then labeled dyspepsia and were thought to be rather serious organic affections. They are the sort of indigestions that a great French clinician once said have their seat above the neck rather than below it. Vague abdominal

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<sup>2</sup> This has always been one of the abuses connected with shrines that the sophistication of tokens of various kinds has become a lucrative commercial venture. Before the Reformation, John Heywood, who wrote the *Interludes* in Henry VIII's time, satirizes very severely, but very properly, the trade in relics of various kinds organized by palmers or supposed pilgrims from the Holy Land. They hawked about all sorts of pretended sacred remains, just as visitors to Egypt brought back portions of what was supposed to be mummy, but was really only embalmed meat of various kinds. This counterfeit mummy worked its "cures" just as the sophisticated relics did. John Heywood presents a character in one of his *Interludes* offering for sale such wonderful articles as a feather from the wing of the Holy Ghost and a portion of the toe nail of God the Father. These absurd relics often worked cures, but quite needlessly to say, not because of any intrinsic virtue, but because of the faith of the people who possessed them and who were deeply affected by the suggestion that in contact with so precious an object there could not possibly remain in them any shade of ill, moral or physical, and that they must get better, and then proceeded to get better. The affections that were "cured," however, were the psychoneuroses, the hysterias, which have always been cured by suggestion.

discomforts of all kinds supposed to be due to serious diseases, probably progressive in character and therefore presumably fatal before long, were also "cured" by the Knock plaster at a distance. I can just recall the excitement over it among the folks around me in boyhood, for all their ancestors and some of themselves had come from the particular county in Ireland in which Knock is situated and they had the feeling that there had been a special recognition from on High of the devotion of those near and dear to them in the old land at home.

As the fame of Knock grew the "cures" multiplied. The usual heap of crutches and canes and apparatus of various kinds to help the lame walk and the bent of body to get along in some way or other, gathered at either side of the church door and were so arranged as to make quite a display. Collections of this kind have always gathered at every shrine, even those which later came to be looked upon as representing not something divine but something entirely too human, because of the abuses which went with them. These crutches and canes and the rest were there still when I visited Knock, though the place had long since been discredited, so far as "cures" were concerned. Undoubtedly all of these striking physical evidences of "cures," that had been made of the most serious physical affections in the persons of people who had come, such as the lame and the halt, and had gone home without their supports, had been left there by people who were in the best of good faith. They were quite sure that they had received such a measure of relief that now they could leave their aids to locomotion behind them. It is surprising how many people there are who if they are injured in any way that

requires them to carry a cane or wear a crutch or apparatus, find it extremely hard to abandon these auxiliaries, unless they are given some special fillip of courage to do so. Some one has to take them in hand and make them trust themselves once more. Crutches, canes and apparatus are the most fallacious evidence in the world of wonder-working healing. I know of half a dozen cases of well-educated men of thoroughgoing common sense who have carried canes and crutches and walked somewhat lame when no one could find any particular reason for their doing so, except the fact that they no longer quite trusted to their own muscular power to support them. It was a mental and not a physical state that was the basis of their lameness.

When I was at Knock there were still a few people who felt that there must have been something wondrous there, some display of extraordinary power because of a close approach of the other world to this, but nobody thinks for a moment now that there was any special worldly intervention of any kind. "Cures" took place in large numbers, as they do wherever there is a hint of the mystical. There are a lot of people always waiting round for something like this to "cure" them. They cannot be *cured* by any ordinary means. I have told the story elsewhere of good old Pfarrer Gassner of Elwangen who, in the eighteenth century, used magnets to "cure" people and made wonderful "cures" so that all the countryside and even people from a distance flocked to him for relief. He found after a time that it was not the magnets that made the "cures," but that it sufficed if those who looked for relief made their peace with God. He proceeded to proclaim, then, that whenever anybody put off the devil with all his works and



pomps, and straightened himself out with the Lord, his ills would drop from him. The devil was the origin of evil and of physical disease and it was affiliation with him that made people suffer. Of course the ecclesiastical authorities refused to allow him to teach any such doctrine as that, and then his "cures" stopped. Nearly the same sort of ecclesiastical disapproval ended the Knock series of incidents after a few years.

It might possibly be thought that Bavaria in the eighteenth century and Ireland in the later nineteenth century represented very different conditions from those to be found, for instance, in America almost in the twentieth century. The Bavarian country people and the poor hard-working Irish in the west of Ireland might be expected to be more ready to believe and be "cured" than our modern Americans. We found, however, that here in America in our generation it was just the same thing. Father Möllinger, out near Pittsburgh a generation ago, gathered a whole series of relics for his church. He really brought together a wonderful collection of them.

With this collection of relics as an incitement to special devotion, people flocked on certain feast days particularly, from all the surrounding country and soon they began to come from long distances. With the relics as a background "cures" began to be reported, though Father Möllinger himself had studied medicine when he was younger and gave prescriptions to people for certain of their ills, or at least made medical suggestions of one kind or another, and he always attributed the "cures" to his remedies and advice. Soon the people came from other states because of the reputation of the "cures" that were being made. I can remember as a



boy how many there were, even among those whom I knew, who had been complaining of one thing or another for years, but who were sure that if they could only get to Father Möllinger, they would, beyond all doubt, be "cured." Many of these people were poor. Yet, though the distance to Pittsburgh was over 300 miles and quite expensive, they made the journey to the shrine, and some of them at least came back "cured." I remember talking with some of them afterwards. From all that I could gather they were sufferers from vague internal disorders or from lamenesses of legs or arms as the result of an injury or rheumatism. It is surprising, as I have said, how often these crippled conditions are cured by healing ideas. Some of them left their canes or crutches at Father Möllinger's church as a sign of their "cure." Others who came in wheel chairs or even on stretchers, walked away. "Cures" of this kind are very familiar to any one who knows nervous diseases. *Astasia-abasia*, which is the long Greek name for the nervous inability to walk or to stand, is not at all infrequent and these people are sometimes "cured" when they have been lying in bed for months unable to move, by an alarm of fire which sends them downstairs on the jump, or sometimes the presence of a burglar in their room or in the house which makes them forget about their condition and use their limbs properly. They are not malingerers, but they are hysterical, and we had a lot of such cases among the young soldiers during the war; "shell shock," it was called, but it was pure hysteria.

The ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese, just as correspondingly with regard to Knock and to many other such supposed exhibitions of miraculous curative

power, not only refused to give any approval, but even to supply the slightest hint of approbation. Such things are allowed to work out their own correction, as they usually do, without any necessity for formal proceedings with regard to them.

There have been many examples even in comparatively recent generations like these. The number of shrines at which people have found healing and which later have failed entirely in curative power and present to the casual visitor only such ruins as are to be seen at Knock, are at least as numerous as the "cures" in general that have failed. I have known a number of cases in which the friends of patients were told that very probably the only thing that would "cure" the person in whom they were interested was some such supreme mental impression as might be produced by a deep religious experience. Some of these prophecies of "cures" have been fulfilled, though the physician had no idea of implying that it would require miraculous power to effect a "cure." Many of the "cures" that are advanced as proof positive of miraculous intervention are more than a little absurd in their inconsequence. The patients often have been to a number of physicians before being healed in this manner and not infrequently the physicians have not seemed to have been able to make up their minds as to just what was the matter with the patient. Whenever that occurs, however, almost inevitably the reason for the physicians' failure to make the diagnosis is that there is nothing very much the matter with the patient's body, though there may be some rather serious condition in the patient's mind.

It is perfectly possible that there may be favorable interference in disease from another world than this.

One would be less than a Christian, at least, not to believe this. Most philosophers, even when not especially religious-minded have emphasized, that unless there is another world than this, this life is absurd. Lord Kelvin, the greatest of physicists, declared in the twentieth century that science demonstrates the existence of a creator and of a providence and he reëchoed the old maxim, "only the fool hath said in his heart there is no God." We know so little as yet, however, about the possibilities of the mind's own powers over the body that all question of special intervention must be judged by objective and not merely subjective criteria.

I spent some days once, at Lourdes, with that fine old French gentleman and thoughtful physician, Dr. Boisserie, who toward the end of his life devoted himself to the clinic at Lourdes. There the histories of patients were taken quite as carefully as in any hospital or physician's office. I remember how he laughed more than a little at the "cures" of neurotic affections of various kinds, especially of vague internal troubles, neurasthenias, nervous inabilities to walk, neurotic crippling and other such ailments which were constantly turning up at the clinic. It was quite different, however, with the "cures" of lupus and other visible or easily demonstrable forms of tuberculosis which constitute considerably more than half of all the "cures" that take place at Lourdes. Any one who turns to Dr. Boisserie's book, or other more recent publications, will be intensely surprised, if he thinks that nervous affections are the main material of the "cures." In spite of the list, however, of these very objective evidences, the church has always refused to give any

formal approbation to Lourdes, and has left its members free to believe in them or reject them, any and all of them, according to their estimate of the value of the testimony in support of them. This is true even for the best authenticated events of the French shrine, as was recently emphasized by Reverend E. Boyd Barrett, S.J., in his article on "Couéism in Theory and Practice."<sup>3</sup>

Mystical cures go on with all sorts of mysteries as the background of their success, undoubtedly the great majority of them following upon the alteration of the attitude of mind toward their ills which comes over people as a consequence of their closeness to the mystery. There is likely to be some of that feeling that they are especially favored and that indeed without that special favor there would be no question of their being "cured." Any merely human means would not quite suffice and some special intervention was needed.

All sorts of religions have appealed to their success in healing as the proof of their divine origin and in our day we have literally dozens of them which are making the same claim. It is easy to understand, then, how many chances for self-deception there are in such matters. When the touch of the English king "cured" people, rival royal families used to appeal for the manifest confirmation of their rights from on High to the "cures" which their members made. The "cures" always occurred no matter how little any possible connection between such rascals on the throne as Richard III, and the Higher Powers, could possibly be imagined. Just exactly the same thing is true for the mystical "cures." All sorts of abuses have followed

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<sup>3</sup> *The Month*, London, June, 1922.

in their train. They represent to a very great extent the supersuggestibility of mankind, that is, the hysterical tendency to make themselves ill and then make themselves well again by taking suggestions, which has always characterized mankind from the old Egyptian temples to the healing religious services in the New York hotels to-day.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PSYCHOANALYSIS AND COUÉ

**P**ERHAPS to some this may seem a strangely assorted combination, psychoanalysis with M. Coué, but they represent distinctly complementary movements in the "curing" of human ills. Both of them expect patients to tap their subconscious or their unconscious, something quite different anyhow from their ordinary consciousness, and by that means make themselves better. Psychoanalysis finds the root of all neurotic ill in sex repression, while M. Coué is quite sure that the root of all ill, physical as well as neurotic, is to be found in lack of confidence in our own natural powers. Both turn to the subconscious, then, and both attract attention because of the "cures" that they effect in that way. The Psychoanalysts claim that they "cure" patients but M. Coué says that he does not "cure" sufferers but enables them to "cure" themselves; that is, he teaches them how to use the powers of healing which they possess and which they were inhibiting before. Both modes of healing depend for success on their release of inhibitions or repressions. M. Coué has reduced the use of the subconscious to its lowest terms. He does not ask you to muckrake through your past for sex insults, but just tells you to bring yourself to think that you are better and then straightway you will be better.



**Psychoanalysis and Hypnotism.**—Any one who wants to get the proper background for the understanding of psychoanalysis should read the chapter on hypnotism in this volume and then get some of the treatises written on the subject in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in which hypnotism was set down as a key to the mystery of mind and matter and telepathy, to say nothing of clairvoyance and a few other things. The vogue of psychoanalysis at the present time is not so great as that of hypnotism a generation ago. The long Greek term has never had the same popular appeal that hypnotism had, though it has caught the *intelligentsia*. Even among these upper classes hypnotism was all the rage. All sorts of intelligent people, many of them quite well educated, some of them professors at universities, a whole lot of them physicians in high standing, not a few of them professors in psychiatry and even a certain number of them professors but especially *assistant professors* of psychology, were quite convinced that hypnotism represented the most wonderful instrument for revealing the secrets of the human mind that had ever been discovered. It was set down as an almost infallible "cure" for all sorts of diseases, neurotic, psychoneurotic, erotic and tommyrotic, and the most wonderful advance in the knowledge of the human mind that had ever been discovered or invented. Most people felt that not to know hypnotism was to be out of touch with one's time. To keep abreast of modern thought neurologists, psychiatrists and psychologists felt that they had to know the last book on hypnotism published anywhere in the world and people of lesser degree in the intellectual world felt that they had to keep in touch with every-

thing about it so as to be able to take part in conversation and understand references to it in current literature. These references, needless to say, were very frequent.

**Induced Hysteria.**—And now we know that hypnotism is only induced hysteria and that the educational and medical world of that time and the *intelligentsia* of that period, so to say, were simply fooling themselves and producing their own manifestations by suggestion. Above all their own autosuggestion was the most active factor in the discoveries that they made. They worked themselves into a state of mind where they magnified the significance of a whole lot of trivial things and utterly perverted the real meaning of a whole series of phenomena that they were studying. Hysteria has been a crux all down the ages. All sorts of people, philosophers, psychologists, ecclesiastics, educators, have been fooled by it. It was not less of a crux to the later nineteenth century, in spite of the precious conceit of that time that it was so far ahead of the past. The personal index of any generation can be judged by the mode of treatment that it presents for hysterical conditions.

The twentieth century seized on psychoanalysis, just as the later nineteenth grabbed on to hypnotism. Hypnotism is a thing of the past, psychoanalysis will be before very long, but in the meantime, writers of fiction, assistant editors, essayists of various kinds, are all engaged in telling us what a wonderful new discovery psychoanalysis is. Above all, they are insisting on how much it enables them to understand about the human mind that they did not understand before, though that is exactly the same sort of thing as their colleagues of the later nineteenth century were telling us of hypno-

tism. Manifestly the ignorance of psychology of both generations was monumental.

Just as hypnotism began its successful career by the cure of hysterical and psychoneurotic patients, so did psychoanalysis. At the beginning it attracted very little attention because just as with hypnotism the claims made for it by its ardent devotees seemed so absurdly exaggerated. But then it began to work "cures." All sorts of psychoneuroses were *cured* by it. At once the world began to sit up and take notice. The medical profession generally took a decided stand against it, but that only made the public feel that the doctors were trying to keep something from them in order to increase their own practice and make more out of their patients. Only a very definite change in the attitude of mind of people toward themselves will cure psychoneuroses and anything that will cause that change will prove eminently curative in a great many cases. You may have a pair of tractors, like Perkins', without electricity or magnetism in them, but they will "cure" your patients, if the patients have patience and confidence. You may be suffering from nervous indigestion or a general feeling of nervousness with dreads hanging over you so that life becomes miserable and appetite and energy are lost until you seem to be very ill, but if it is the fashion to take a whisky tonic, and a number of other people have been "cured" by the remedy, why then that will "cure" you. You may be "cured" by walking around in the dewy grass in the morning, or by a harmless magnet or by anything else—or by psychoanalysis. That is always important to remember with regard to new "cures."

**Mind Cure.**—Psychoanalysis is, of course, just like

Couéism, a pure mind "cure," a method of treatment which changes the attitude of mind of patients toward their ills, and of course, like all the other means of altering the state of mind, "cures" people. According to its etymology, psychoanalysis is a method of "loosening up the mind"—to translate the Greek term literally—in the hope of finding certain submerged ideas which are said to have been forced into the "unconscious," bringing these to the patient's attention and thus releasing inhibitions that have been disturbing him without his conscious knowledge of them. As the result of this psychoanalytic or "mind loosening up" process, patients proceed to get over various neuroses and psychoneuroses and to eliminate, or at least greatly reduce the inhibitory action of various dreads and obsessions which have in many of them been a source of rather serious disturbance of mind and through that also of body. A good many of these patients are declared to have been the rather pitiable victims of "buried ideas," before the saving system of psychoanalysis came to save them from themselves. The method was introduced by Freud of Vienna, and it supposes, as the basis of its power to work "cures," that there is in the human mind a layer of unconscious or subconscious knowledge, out of which come motives that influence human conduct very deeply and above all modify many human reactions in life in the direction of disease and suffering of various kinds, usually expressed through the nerves in the shape of various psychoneuroses.

Subconscious and unconscious are terms which have achieved widespread popularity in recent years. They are supposed to be new but the terms themselves, as well as the phenomena put under them, have been the subject

of discussion ever since men reflected on the mode of activity of their minds and formulated anything like psychology. Some 325 years ago, Leibnitz emphasized the important rôle of the unconscious in the mental life and brought out fundamentally what the psychoanalysts are now hailing as a new discovery. Maine de Biran, who is sometimes spoken of as the founder of modern French psychology and whose principal work was done in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century, distinguished very clearly in his psychology a higher life of mental activity and rational reflection from a lower stratum of the mind, *affection simple*, which asserts itself in dreams, at moments of inattention or whenever passion and not reason rules over conduct, as well as in the midst of unreasoned likes and dislikes, which mean so much in human life. It will be readily seen that this is the complete anticipation of Coué's ideas as well as of Freud's teaching, except for the insistence on the sex nature as the source of practically all the functional nervous disturbances and the various psychoneuroses, which characterizes the Vienna specialist's system. Following in Buffon's footsteps, who had taught the doctrine of *homo duplex*, Maine de Biran also anticipated most of what we now hear so much with regard to dual personality or the other self or the submerged or subconscious self. In his maturer years the French psychologist added a third level which he called *la vie divine*, in which man's higher powers for poetry, religion and the like are manifest.

Across the border in Germany about the middle of the nineteenth century Hartmann, the German philosophic writer, published three large octavo volumes on the philosophy of the unconscious in which, with Teu-



tonic thoroughness, he exhausted one phase of the subject. What he discusses is our instinctive knowledge and reactions and what nature accomplishes for us without our knowing anything about the how or the why of it. All our vegetative functions, as they are called, the ordinary vital functions of our being are accomplished quite as perfectly while we are asleep as when we are awake and our definite attention to them is not only not needed but often proves seriously disturbing to them whenever we become conscious of their activities. It is surprising how extensive this phase of the unconscious actually is. Hartmann's work is exhaustive, but it does not go beyond its subject and it does not drag in far-fetched notions of all kinds under the term unconscious. It is easy to see from this how much might be said about the unconscious and subconscious in connection with disease or medical ideas without advancing anything new, and how much chance is afforded for vague generalization.

In spite of this plain history of ever recurring discussion of the unconscious, which constitutes the basic elements of the system, Freudianism is looked upon by ardent advocates as not only new but distinctly novel and as representing one of the most important discoveries ever made in psychology. It has even been hailed by enthusiastic devotees of the cult, for, as we shall see, it is a cult rather than a system of thought, as the most important discovery of our time. Freud himself has more than hinted and is evidently quite ready to admit that Copernicus, Darwin and himself have each in turn revolutionized human thinking more than any others in modern times at least. These delusions of grandeur, as we have seen in preceding chapters,



are very common among healers. The surprise is that they secure so many disciples ready to believe in them.

On the other hand, those who do not accept psychoanalysis as a legitimate therapeutic measure—and they represent the great majority of serious professors of psychology in this country and in Europe as well as the older physicians here and abroad who are well aware of how the medical profession has been run away with, over and over again, by fads of healing—do not hesitate to say that this is just another of the curious fashions in medicine and especially in therapeutics that come and go so regularly and that make up that amusing chapter in our medical history, “The Cures That Fail.” The only reason why it has made its way is because of the “cures” that have been effected through its employment by enthusiastic followers of the cult. But surely we know enough by this time of the history of cures to realize that “cures” in themselves do not mean anything, unless we know very definitely of what the patients were cured. We have in this exactly what we have in the other modes of mental healing, “cures” effected by a change in the mental attitude.

**Psychologists and Psychoanalysis.**—We have already seen how old is the recognition of certain phases of the unconscious or subconscious and need only emphasize now how much serious modern psychologists deprecate the loose use of these terms which has given Freudianism its popularity. Professor Münsterberg of Harvard once declared “the story of the subconscious can be told in three words—there is none.” He paid his compliments also to the loose use of the word unconscious by saying that “the assumption that there is such a thing as the unconscious as an entity is not founded

in fact and is contrary to the teaching of the science of psychology." Professor Knight Dunlap, Professor of Experimental Psychology at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in an article on The Social Need for Scientific Psychology,<sup>1</sup> said:

"Scientific psychology is the sure antidote for Freudianism, because of its logical method and its fundamental working hypothesis, that the fact of consciousness is uniformly connected with reaction. Refusing the *a priori* concept of a world of mental objects, and adopting the empirically given fact of being conscious, scientific psychology removes the ground on which the doctrine of 'unconscious consciousness' is based; and by emphasizing in its working hypothesis the continuity and common ground of habits of action and habits of thinking, and their essential interrelation, scientific psychology explains the facts of conscious life, whether of waking life or of dreams, without leaving any function for the mystic 'unconsciousness,' even if one should wish to posit it.

"Furthermore, by its insistence on the fundamental logical precaution of using a term only in a definite and uniform sense, scientific psychology destroys the method of procedure which Freudians borrow from the mystics, which method consists in employing the well-known logical fallacy of the ambiguous middle term. Robbed of the easily shifting meanings of *libido*, sexual, unconscious and the other stock terms, and with the light turned on its *a priori* basis, the Freudian system goes to pieces inevitably."

**Freud's Jumble.**—Freud has taken all the vagueness of psychology, jumbled them together and then by a shifting use of terms has made a system that would fit anything. We have all been aware, ever since there

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<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Monthly*, December, 1920.

was any reflection, that data that we held in our memory were not in our consciousness. At any given moment we do not know what is in our memory; we have to sit down and recall the contents. Sometimes we may be quite sure that we have something in our memory, and yet we cannot recall it. Very often this will come back of itself without any effort, several hours or days later. There is another part of our mental makeup that is quite apart from our consciousness. Many men can make up their minds to wake up at a definite hour, or very close to it, and unless they are very tired will do so. As the deaf man who could not hear his alarm clock, said: "You can set yourself to wake up." What it is that wakes us we do not know very clearly, though the term that is used for it is our will. Besides there are a large number of things that we do without reflection by instinctive processes. Put all these together and see what an immense field for theorizing and therapeutic application there is. Hartmann, two generations ago, was able to write three big volumes on this phase of the unconscious without exhausting the subject. Freudianism is not new, then, except in its application of all this confused mass of notions to the "cure" of humanity's ills.

**Sex Element.**—To this miscellaneous farrago which can be hauled in under the word subconscious or unconscious, Freud added another and even more vague element, that of sex. The field for suggestion in all matters relating to sex is, almost needless to say, nearly limitless. The insistence that all the psychoneuroses are dependent on sex or to use the more non-committal word, the *libido*, is just on a par with our own Dr. Phineas Quimby's emphasis that all the affections of

which mankind complains is a belief, or Mrs. Eddy's reiterations that all disease is an error of mortal mind and only to be "cured" by an acknowledgment of this error. All three systems of therapeutics are founded on "cured cases." Cured cases, however, represent a very shifting foundation on which to construct a system of philosophy of disease and its therapeutics. Of course sex has a very strong appeal, particularly to women, and the chance to rake over one's whole sex life with a man, in no way related to one, makes, for the hysterically inclined particularly, an alluringly entertaining occupation.

Freudianism contains, besides, a series of veiled suggestions, if not perfectly open inferences that the psychoneurotics and hysterics, so far as there may be any difference between the two, are really not responsible for their symptoms but are the victims of one or more buried sex insults or disagreeable sex incidents of early life, and to be pitied and sympathized with in their sufferings. Could anything be better calculated to draw a whole series of hysterical patients to the physician who will thus afford an excuse for them and give them the consolation of feeling that it required the discovery of this new system of thought and philosophy of life to relieve them.

Foerster, the distinguished Munich psychologist, who has written extensively on sex because so much of modern life is occupied with it and whose books representing the conservative side of thought on sex matters, and especially on sex teaching, have gone through so many editions, has stressed particularly the lack of common sense in Freud's sex ideas. He is not a physician, but a very common-sense thinker of broad sympathies

and deep knowledge of human nature. His insistence that the practice of self-control and self-denial will do more to prevent sex divagations and to empty the mind of sex influences rather than any "loosening up of the mind," or psychoanalysis, so-called, has drawn wide attention to his works. According to Freud, practically all the psychoneuroses are due to sex repressions. Professor Foerster replies very simply that there never was a time when there were so many psychoneurotic conditions noted as at present, though there also never was a time when there was so little sex repression as now. The newspapers reek with sex crimes, the magazines are full of sex stories, the theater is almost entirely occupied with sex problems, bedroom farces, triangle situations and all the rest of the suggestive material in this line. Even the novel writers are invading the domain of sex subjects from all sides because they have learned that this is the easiest way to sell their books. On the other hand, there are a great many people who practice sex repression faithfully and have practiced it from their early years, who have no trouble with the neuroses or psychoneuroses. Those who make it a rule not to let sex intrude on their work because they have a sense of duty that binds them to it, and who therefore repress very completely the sex urge, instead of being spineless neurotics, as might be expected from Freud's philosophy, are the really strong characters of our time. Quite contrary to Freud's suggestion, it is those who let themselves go in matters of sex and who are very much preoccupied with their sexual spheres, having very little that they have to do and without serious occupation of mind and body, who are most inclined to the neurotic conditions.



Of course there are followers of Freud, or at least psychoanalysts, who insist that sex is not the only source of the psychoneuroses. But even they confess that the sex factor plays by far the largest and most important rôle in the matter and indeed that other repressions play comparatively so unimportant a part in what they sometimes call the drama of the psychoneuroses as to be of very little significance. The cases in which the repression of other than sexual impulses or tendencies are claimed to be the source of the psychoneurotic symptoms, the *fons et origo mali*, as one of the psychoanalytic writers with classical memories suggested, do not represent one per cent even of the whole number of illustrative cases that have found their way into the literature. It is always the sex cases that are presented as furnishing striking examples of marvelous "cures." Without the sex element psychoanalysis would have attracted very little attention and would represent only a revival of some very old thoughts with regard to the influence of "buried memories" and insurgent instincts that have often been discussed before our time and never more so than by the medieval writers of spiritual books who were guiding men as regards the temptations and trials of life. A Kempis, the most printed book after the Bible, is full of references to this insurgency of nature and the influence of apparently forgotten memories, on conduct and especially on our peace of mind.

As if the unconscious and subconscious and sex did not combine in themselves enough of vagueness, Freud has superadded to these, dreams. His interpretation of dreams has been the source of ridicule by every psychologist worthy of the name who has ever studied it seriously. Dreams are, almost as a rule, the result of



sensations trying to steal into our consciousness while we are asleep and gathering around them, during the waking process, all sorts of vague notions in our memories. Many that seemed long are extremely brief. Freud's symbolism of dreams is one of the weirdest contributions to presumed psychology ever made. Everything in dreams refers to sex and everything in the world can be a symbol of sex. The interpretation of dreams on the Freudian plan is the biggest joke given out in the name of science that we have ever had. And it is, after all, only a recurrence to the oldest therapeutic mode about which we know anything, when in the temple hospitals of Egypt they made dreams and their suggestions the basis of treatment for all manner of ills.

**First Cured Case.**—The famous first case cured by psychoanalysis was a patient suffering from hysteria. That ought to be enough of itself to stamp psychoanalysis as of extremely dubious utility. Hysteria is supersuggestibility. It is "cured" only by the acceptance of a contrary suggestion. The medium which carries this suggestion makes absolutely no difference for the success of it. It may be a vile-tasting medicine, or a bad-smelling drug, like *asafoetida*, it may be a magnet or a toy Leyden jar, or Perkins' tractors, or Dowie or Coué—it is the suggestion that counts. Psychoanalysis carried the suggestion across and "cured" the patient, then was hailed as a great new discovery. But so was everything else that had ever "cured" hysteria. All the rest are in the lumber room of disused "cures." That is the fate just ahead for psychoanalysis also. Already it is on the way, as is very clear, and not a few of those who were aboard the good ship in full sail a

few years ago are beginning to abandon her. Even the professors and the great inventor confess that they cannot make use of psychoanalysis after forty and that it fails when relapses take place. The rest of the world is just beginning to know how frequent relapses are. So there you are. Of course our generation had to have a more subtle appeal than dried excrement or crushed vermin, or even than such an electrical excitation as Leyden jars or Perkins' tractors. Psychology represented that appeal and psychoanalysis was the result and is going down the road with the others.

Cures! Cures!—But Freudianism makes "cures," therefore there must be something wonderful in it. Well so did Greatrakes make "cures," and Mesmer and St. John Long with his famous liniment, and Perkins with his tractors and Dowie and Schlatter and osteopathy and chiropractic and now last of all, but not least, our friend M. Coué, the druggist from Nancy. Cures, cures, cures! It is worth while, under the circumstances, to see what physicians, and especially those who have been mainly occupied with the care of neurological cases, think of Freudianism. In Vienna, where the opportunity to see psychoneurotic cases is large, Freud has never been taken seriously. One might think that this was possibly because a prophet is never in honor in his own country. Any one who knows, however, how ready the Viennese medical profession is to boost the discoveries of its own school, will know that Freud must have been quite impossible for them to have neglected him. Of course the French school, led by Dr. Janet, have simply made fun of Freud, his sex exaggeration, his fairy story dream interpretation, his folklore symbolism and his "cures" of hysteria. The English neurolo-

gists have been even severer in their condemnation. A well-known English neurologist did not hesitate to declare that "psychoanalysis is a real danger to society is my serious conviction." A number of English physicians have insisted that it was doing serious harm to young nervous patients to have their sex past raked over in the way that is supposed to be necessary to "loosen up the mind" for Freudian therapeusis.

**Neurologists' Opinions.** — Leaders of medical thought here in America with the most right to have opinions as to nervous and mental diseases have been quite as severe in their condemnation of psychoanalysis as the psychologists and their foreign medical colleagues. Dr. Dercum of Philadelphia, one of the best known of our neurologists, does not hesitate to declare "psychoanalysis an outcome of the general mystic tendency of the modern world." Acceptance of it is a matter of faith, not reasoning and "psychoanalysis is a cult, a creed, the disciples of which constitute a sect. To be admitted to its brotherhood it is merely necessary that the novice should be converted to the faith, not that he should be convinced by scientific proof; for none such is possible."

As for the "cures," he reminds us, that so far from being evidence for the acceptance of psychoanalysis they should rather constitute grounds for suspicion as to its real significance. For the patients "cured," sufferers from psychoneuroses of various kinds, represent exactly the class of patients who have been "cured" by all sorts of curious "cures" all down the centuries. They have furnished raw material for "the cures that have failed" in ever so many chapters of medical history. The psychoneurotics, the hysterics, like the poor, we have always

with us and it is because of them that it has become so difficult to appreciate the genuine therapeutic value of new remedial measures. These patients with their definite hysterical tendencies simulate nearly every disease under the sun, and a few others besides, and they get "cured" by any and every new thing that strikes their fancy. It matters not what the method of treatment is, if it only impresses them sufficiently, they will get over whatever they think they have the matter with them.

Dr. Dercum does not hesitate to foretell the approaching end of the cult, just as so many other similar therapeutic movements have come and gone. The height of their popularity at any given moment was absolutely no guaranty that ten years later, or less, they would be utterly rejected and considered as quite absurd. Concluding his address as the President of the Philadelphia Psychiatric Society seven years ago, Professor Dercum said:

"The prophecy can with safety be ventured that psychoanalysis will in due course pass away, will in due course be a matter of history and it will then take its place side by side with other mystic practices, such as animal magnetism, mesmerism, Braidism, hypnotism, metallotherapy, Perkinism, Dowieism, Eddyism, Worcesterism, divine healing, New Thought, the Bergeon treatment of tuberculosis, hanging in locomotor ataxia, and other weird procedures that have time and again swept the earth in epidemic form."

**Analyzing Themselves.**—The representative New York specialist in mental and nervous diseases, Dr. Peterson, is quite as emphatic as Dr. Dercum in his condemnation of psychoanalysis. He makes great fun

of the sex urge as the root of all the psychoneuroses and suggests that it is all in the point of view. "Rabelais had Pantragrue! meet one Gaster (the stomach) in his travels who claimed that all the arts, powers and accomplishments of our civilization were the sublimation of the desire of the stomach. One theory is as good as another, they are both Rabelaisian!" As for the significance of the analyses of the minds of patients that are made by the method, Dr. Peterson considers them just a reflection of the minds of the analyst, of his interests, his ways of looking at things and his general outlook on life. He says: "If one reads the analyses made by the psychoanalysts, one will find a complete revelation there of the type of mind of the analyst himself, his intelligence, his symbolism, his character; indeed one will learn more of him in this way than one will of the unfortunate patient the analyst thinks he is studying."

Dr. Peterson, however, is very definitely persuaded that psychoanalysis may do, and is actually doing, immense harm. He founds that opinion on his own experience with patients who had been psychoanalyzed. "I have seen very bad results from the psychoanalysis of young women and young men, permanent insanity, even suicide." Like Dr. Dercum he foresees the end of the cult before long, but does not hesitate to say: "If it were not destined to be so short-lived I should advocate a law to prevent its employment in the treatment of young people." While we have heard so much of "cures" by the psychoanalysts, Dr. Peterson goes so far as to say, "I doubt if any persons have been benefited by this treatment." He recognizes that the "cured" cases are just exactly those which were seen in connection with hypno-



tism and animal magnetism and all the other isms and that are represented by such incidents in the history of medicine as Bishop Berkeley's tar water—which "cured" himself and his friends of nearly every ill that flesh was heir to—and the sympathetic powder and the *unguentum armarium* and all the other mystic processes that have led a certain number of people to announce that though before their use they were ill, now, lo! and behold! they are well and a great wonder of healing has been worked and there must be some new and marvelous discovery to account for the change that has taken place in them.

Philadelphia and New York have taken a decided stand through representative neurologists against psychoanalysis, and Boston, not to be behind in this matter, has gone even a step farther. Dr. Boris Sidis has been much more drastic in his condemnation. He does not hesitate to say that "Freudian psychoanalysis should be openly declared a fraud." He goes even farther and agrees with all those who have made a deep study of it that it is not a system of thought, but a mode of belief. As Boris Sidis says, "Psychoanalysis is a sex religion; it is a sort of Mormonism." Probably most neurologists would not go the lengths to which he goes in his succeeding sentences, but any one who has seen and appreciated how much of harm has been done to public thinking generally by the suggestive influence of this decadent cult from Vienna, can understand very readily why Dr. Sidis is pushed into such strong expressions. He said:

"The psychoanalyst, with his allegories, symbolism, sublimation, incest, phantasies, bisexuality, sexual suppression, mother complexes, œdipus and electra phan-



tasms, and all the other complex psychoanalytical instrumentalities, is an excellent example of sex obsessed, delusional dementia præcox."

**Harm, Not Good.**—My own experience with cases treated by Freudianism has been rather limited, though a certain number of them have been sent to me after Freudianism had worked them harm. I have seen a young woman in the early twenties, whose principal trouble was that she was below normal weight from undereating, rendered almost distraught, so that she could scarcely think of anything else, by the tracing of all her neurotic depression and symptoms to a so-called sex incident which was said to have been the source of all her subsequent suffering. A child had been born to her mother when she was of an age to notice something about the matter and this was declared to be a "sex insult" to her feelings which had predisposed her to hysterical manifestations of all kinds. When it is recalled that in the preceding generation, when there were seven or eight or more children in the family, every one of the elder children went through this sort of thing and came out of it with a new reverence for motherhood and for humanity and a proper realization of the place of sex, such an interpretation would be amusing if it were not so amazing. I have seen a young man of neurotic temperament driven almost to suicide by his utter preoccupation with himself and his fleshly past. I have seen physicians, particularly, who were benefited for a time and then suffered serious relapse because of dabbling with Freudianism and the assumption that it would relieve their dreads and fears and make them have a more comfortable life. I have never known any one permanently benefited by psychoanalysis, though

I have heard of many "cured" for a time who afterwards relapsed.

**Coué to the Rescue.**—It is refreshing, then, to find that there is some one ready to use the unconscious for the "cure" of disease without muckraking all over the sex past, often finding things that never happened at all or only in the imagination of the patient, or creating them out of the mind of the physician, through suggestion in susceptible patients. M. Coué is quite sure that the unconscious self is the grand director of all our functions. When the unconscious is at fault, then our functions invariably go wrong, but fortunately M. Coué has discovered how to make them go right. He calls his system "Self-Mastery by Conscious Auto-Suggestion," but he dwells very much on the fact that it is the unconscious which leads us. We must be careful about using our wills. When the will and the imagination are in conflict, the imagination always wins. Indeed, in any conflict between the will and the imagination the force of the imagination is in direct ratio to the square of the will. Just why that good old-fashioned word "imagination" should be used in this way is rather hard to determine, but then M. Coué was a druggist without any knowledge of psychology and he uses terms to suit himself, quite regardless of their previous use or the application of them to very definite ideas before his time.

*The French druggist healer* through the unconscious has a very naïve way of putting his system that seems simplicity itself, and really assumes that one of the greatest of mysteries, that of life, can be solved by just saying that you have solved it. He says that during our sleep, when we are unconscious, the organs of our thorax and abdomen continue to be active. Our hearts

beat, our lungs breathe, our stomachs and intestines go on with their peristaltic movements—they work while we sleep—and that it is evident, therefore, that it is our unconscious that runs us in the sense of maintaining our bodily health. He suggests, then, that our best hope for the maintenance of health is to learn to run our unconscious, and then we can run ourselves. Could anything be more simple? We run our unconscious by making repeated suggestions to it whenever we are in a somewhat dreamy state and our consciousness, as it were, is off guard, and our unconscious can be reached without trouble. This makes a nice word formula to express the solution of the most important problem we have and one that most of us realize has been the crux of medicine and science down the ages.

What M. Coué insists on is that he does not “cure” his patients, as we have said, but that he teaches them how to “cure” themselves. For this, all that is necessary is that they should keep on telling their subconscious that they are going to get better and are in actual course of betterment, and then they will surely get well. To be certain that they will keep on telling themselves, M. Coué has made a formula which his patients must repeat. The words for this in English preferred by the French clinician are: “Day by day in every way I grow better and better.” Another form of it is: “Every day in *every* way I am getting better and better.” The second *every* must be emphasized so as to remove every symptom of disease. M. Coué suggests the making of twenty knots on a string and using this to count the repetitions of this magic curative formula. There must be no arguing about it, the patient tranquilizes himself or waits until he catches himself in a dreamy drowsy

mood, with his mind as nearly a blank as possible, and then he must say articulately the formula. The best times for the repetition is just as we awake, at night just as we are going to sleep, and at moments during the day when we feel drowsy, and when there are no thoughts preoccupying us. The unconscious self is most approachable at these moments. That is something to learn about the unconscious.

One might think that the whole thing was a joke and that surely people would not be "cured" by any such simple means as this, that is, by just telling themselves that they are going to get better. According to M. Coué himself, however, and his ardent disciples he has "cured" nearly one hundred per cent of the thousands of patients who come to see him. He has relieved all of them and has worked absolute miracles of healing in three out of every four of them. There are testimonials of "cured" cases of tuberculosis and organic heart disease, prolapse of the uterus and rectum, frontal sinus disease that had persisted in spite of a dozen operations and above all paralysis of various kinds. Indeed the great triumph of Coué's clinic is the curing of paralysis in nearly every form. Potts disease—tuberculosis of the spine—is, of course, child's play for the new healing method and so is hip-joint disease and such very material affections as club foot. Varicose ulcers, bunions and pains of all kinds have vanished before the subconscious persuasion produced by the persistent dinning into the unconscious of the emphatic statement, "every day in every way I am getting better and better."

**Coué and University Professors.**—Of course university professors have, as ever, fallen for this new

system of healing. Professor Baudouin proclaims that, "the psychological and medico-pedagogical movement initiated by M. Coué is one of the notable scientific happenings of the present epoch." This is just the sort of thing that was being said by ardent disciples of Freud a few years ago. His system was going to revolutionize systematized thought of every kind. It is great to contemplate the number of revolutions that are worked in philosophy and pedagogy—but above all pedagogy—by these new systems of healing. Three-quarters of a century ago Andrew Jackson Davis was working a revolution in thought and education. Recently Frederick Matthias Alexander from the South Seas has been "redeeming" our university professors "body and soul." Professor Baudouin ventures to join psychoanalysis and Couéism, though I did not know that fact when I wrote the title of this chapter and I doubt whether we would agree about anything more than the juxtaposition of the names. He said: "The teachings of the new Nancy school are destined in conjunction with the teaching of psychoanalysis to effect a renovation of psychology, medicine and pedagogy. As supplements of Bergsonianism, the two will probably achieve the renovation of philosophy as well." Now there is a trinity for you: Coué, Freud, Bergson—saviors of philosophy and the world!

**Reforming Pedagogy.**—Poor pedagogy, everything that comes along any more proceeds to reform that. When the Spencerian-Haeckelian-Mullerian theory—ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny—first came in it was going to reform pedagogy, but to quote Vernon Kellogg, the theory proved to be mostly wrong and what was right in it was very hard to find, so our reforming



friends, the biological pedagogues, came a cropper. Hypnotism was promised as a reformer of education at least for those who were a little undermined in intellect, and then Freudianism and now Couéism. I wish they would leave poor pedagogy alone. No one cares very much if they fool with grown-ups, but they ought to let up on the defenseless school children; even the children of a larger growth who are at college ought to be spared from them at least until they get into graduate departments. Whenever small minds get hold of a new idea, or what seems to them a new idea, they just feel that they are going to reform the world with it and especially education. It was ever thus!

Coué and his doctrines really deserve a hearty welcome if he would only appreciate properly their limitations. He has reduced the "cure" business to its lowest terms. He tells the psychoneurotics, whose name is legion, and who are always with us, to just think that you are better, but think it early and often and deeply and confidently and then you will be better. You do not have to stultify yourself by accepting foolish notions nor pretending to believe absurdities and ridiculous contradictions of common sense. All that you have to believe is that you have been a fool—and that surely is not hard for most of us—that you have been believing yourself ill when you were really not ill, or at most only very slightly ill, and that now you no longer believe it.

But Coué say that he "cures" cancer and tuberculosis and heart disease and tumors and infantile paralysis and here is where he makes the mistake that will inevitably render his system dangerous for the patients who come to him suffering from serious physical ills of many kinds.



He "cures" cases that are diagnosed by the patients themselves or that have been announced as having such diseases by some other fool who knew no better, and then thinks that his system "cures" the diseases thus named. Diagnosis is the all important part of practical medicine. Coué is "curing" the hysterical minded. That is easy by suggestion, and yet very difficult unless the suggestion gains thorough access to the patient's mind. That is why we always need new "cures" for it, because when the novelty wears off the old "cures" no longer get across. But Coué has been a very valuable factor in clearing up the situation. More power to his simple formula and to his system of healing. Where it can do great good above all is in showing up the pretentious absurdity of other systems of "cure."

## CHAPTER XV

### CONSCIOUS EVOLUTION AND CONSCIOUS CONTROL

WE have heard so much about the subconscious and the unconscious in recent years and the extremely important place which they hold in life and health that the poor conscious powers of humanity seem in our day to have been relegated to the scrap heap of worn out faculties of human nature, whose usefulness has been almost outlived or whose value has come to be extremely limited with the development of civilization and of man. Indeed some of the strenuous advocates of the supremely important place of the unconscious and the subconscious have suggested a comparison of humanity in this regard to the iceberg. Only one-fifth or less of the iceberg appears above the surface of the water and this is about the proportionate amount of the conscious that has an active place in existence, while "the hidden giant of the unconscious" or "the submerged self of the subconscious" is represented by the other four-fifths hidden beneath the surface of the water which makes the iceberg ever so much more dangerous to shipping than the very small part which appears to the eye. It is from our other selves, our submerged personalities, that all our trouble comes; through them we must be cured.

Fortunately in the last few years a definite reaction has come against this exaggeration of the significance of the unconscious, or as aforesaid, subconscious, and the

neglected conscious is coming into its own again. It is all a matter of words, of course, but words can be powerful as alterative medicines whenever they change people's ideas with regard to their ailments. Psychoanalysis and M. Coué by developing a special psychology of their own to suit their purposes, and by sending their patients to their subconscious and their unconscious, have counted their "cures" by the thousands every year. But that does not mean that the antonym, the conscious, may not be restored to its pristine station in life by some present or future healer, and may not be used to denote a resource just as effective as the un- or the sub-conscious when describing a new curative method.

Here in this country we have had at least one athletic trainer who began by teaching people how to use their muscles and bring about muscular development, and then found a larger field for the employment of his genius in a system of instruction in what he called conscious evolution. At first he made muscle training and development the be-all and end-all of existence, but the number interested in that was very limited compared to the larger number who wanted to have health and good feeling without taking exercise and without the trouble of getting tired. According to the new system, then, to maintain health and prevent disease and develop your powers of mind and body until you could use them to the greatest possible advantage for health and prosperity, all you had to do was to cultivate "the conscious evolution" of your being. This, it was insisted, would give you not only vigor and heartiness of body, but also deepen your mental ability and confer upon you the faculty of making money and insure your success

in life, no matter what your aim might be. All your handicaps of any and every kind were to be removed by the magic formula of "conscious evolution." What most people need is a formula. They want a short cut, an easy way to accomplishment, that will take the place of the necessity of effort on their part in "making up their minds" which is the impression commonly used when men really mean "making up their wills."

When it was clear that "conscious evolution" had such a vogue there was no question but that the "conscious" would come to be applied once more in other directions, at least so far as words were concerned. "Conscious control" was the next claimant for attention. The inventor of the system was a voice culturist from Australia. Of course he discovered a new method of voice culture and voice production. Did any one ever know a professor of elocution or of voice culture who was deeply interested in his work who did not discover an absolutely new method of training the voice? The Australian professor ran true to type. He lost his own voice—it is to be hoped that no one would be unkind enough to say that this aphonia was very probably hysterical, though that is the most usual nosology for readily recoverable loss of the voice—and then having discovered how to bring it back, he proceeded to teach all the world the secret that he had found.

Having elaborated this new method of voice production and control he found, after a time, that the principles underlying his discovery with regard to the voice would also control and maintain health generally. He had been, up to this time, in quite delicate health himself, so he proceeded to apply it to his own case with marvelous success. How many of these healers begin by curing

themselves? No physician is quite willing to diagnose or treat his own case because he knows how little he knows of this immensely complex machine of the body, and how liable he is to have his feelings run away with his judgment when he himself, or his family is concerned. All the healers with a special mission, however, confidently diagnose and then successfully treat themselves. They have no hesitation at all, indeed they know that the only one who really knows anything about their case is themselves and that no one else could possibly be able to do for them what they can do themselves. Any one who is reasonably familiar with nervous diseases is prone to wonder when he reads their stories what was really the matter with them. Hysteria is such a multiform disease that it may mask itself almost under any symptoms. The one supremely noticeable feature of it is that any impressive suggestion will cure it, even in its most aggravated form, if the suggestion once gains entry into the mind. Having cured himself, then, the Australian voice culturist proceeded to set himself up as a healer in the sense of a giver of health to others.

His method is of the simplest. He has the key to the mystery of disease and health and it can be given in less than half a dozen words. All that is needed is respiratory reëducation and conscious control. Breathing exercises and proper pose and poise of body so as to bring the muscles into action in the right way—there is the whole secret. Most of the newly invented methods of voice culture are founded on some elaborate mode, supposed at least to be novel, of directing the breathing. Each new inventor in this line is quite sure that no one ever lighted on this particular method, so it is with Mr.

Alexander. Having transferred his method of breathing exercises to the restoration and maintenance of health, his system is comparatively easy to understand. He is quite sure that the greatest difficulty that mankind is laboring under with regard to its health at the present time is its failure to breathe properly. He is quite confident, however, that he can teach the world to breathe properly and hold itself well, and then *all* will be well.

It is amusing to take some of Alexander's expressions and not take them too seriously, of course, and note some of the nice, mouth-filling words of his formularies.<sup>1</sup> It would be mighty hard at times to make out just what they meant, but that would depend on how seriously you took the underlying key to health and the cure and prevention of all disease as being dependent on respiratory reëducation and conscious control. The main element in all of the supposedly marvelous contributions to the literature of health in the past has always been words, words, words. A collection of the books of healers who had made wonderful discoveries and were quite sure that they were destined to "cure" all the ills that flesh is heir to and a few more besides would constitute a wonderful series of volumes consisting mainly of polysyllabic words. Here is what seems a typical example of this sort of thing in the latest of the healers: "The first principle of all training from the earliest years of child life must be on a conscious plane of coördination, reëducation and readjustment which will establish a normal kinæsthesia or muscular discrimination." It would make an excellent exercise for a class in English composition to put that sentence into

<sup>1</sup> *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, New York, 1916.



shorter words and thus make its meaning or lack of meaning clearer than it is, but above all show how little meaning there is in it. The more conscious attention there is to function the more disturbed it is likely to be is the experience of physicians all down the ages, but then we have changed all that as the result of this great new discovery from Australia.

His book is just full of these wordy polysyllabic expressions, glittering generalities of the veriest kind, expressing what are often the simplest platitudes in words of ponderous length and almost thunderous sound. Here is an example: "Any one who has acquired the power of coördinating himself correctly can readjust the parts of his body to meet the requirements of almost any position while always commanding adequate and correct movements of the respiratory apparatus and perfect control"; which I suppose is as much as to say, "Use your muscles properly and you can stand and sit right and breathe and talk well."

Proper breathing by itself alone, for instance, Mr. Alexander says, is perfectly capable of curing anemia, "the white face becoming a natural color." As under the word anemia may be represented everything from the pallor of under eating or of going out without breakfast in the morning, through the chlorosis of young women consequent upon the presence of too small a heart and arteries, up to pernicious anemia, the most fatal of metabolic diseases, it becomes easy to understand what a wonderful panacea for the correction of all blood defects from a failure to manufacture to over destruction of red blood corpuscles, breathing exercises must be. His system, however, is quite as capable of bringing about that most difficult consummation so

devoutly to be wished and the subject of so many desires, "a reduction of fat in the obese by its being burned off with the extra oxygen supply." All that over-fat patients have to do is just to breathe their fat away. What a lovely formula that is, what could be simpler or more satisfying to those who dislike effort and especially find it extremely difficult to practice self-denial. Is it any wonder that the new healer has gained popularity among sedentary livers? His promise to reduce obesity without necessity for exercise—he is by the way not a great believer in exercise, and therefore a favorite with those who dislike it—and without the always grievous task of having to abstain from one's favorite fattening foods, comes quite as a heaven sent message. Here is a healer who has a heart for the little weaknesses of mankind.

Breathing exercises in a word become the master key that unlocks the mystery of all disease and supplies that curative impulse which will practically rid human beings of anything they have the matter with them. Of course the Australian seer does not state his contribution to healing in any such simple words as I have ventured to use here. Long words are talismanic in their effect upon ailing patients, especially when they are the class who have the consciousness that what ordinary folk could understand readily could scarcely be expected to cure *their* ills. Highly educated psychoneurotics must have something mysterious stated in a recondite formula and with words that are unfamiliar and not easy for the commonality of people to comprehend at all, gathered together into sentences that have an impressive length and very few small words. Alexander's claim as synthesized by himself is very simple, but very far reaching.

"My first claim is that psycho-physical guidance by conscious control, when applied as a universal principle to 'living,' constitutes an *unfailing* preventive for disease, mental and physical, for malformations and loss of general efficiency." This claim is not exactly what would be called a modest one. Stated in plain terms it implies that this method can prevent all bodily diseases, and we have quite a number of them from pneumonia and tuberculosis and heart disease to brain and arterial disease, through kidney disease and the infections, to say nothing of cancer and a few others—and all mental diseases, that is, insanity, in all its forms, whether acquired through toxic factors or induced by heredity. It goes a step farther than that and prevents deformities and of course guarantees against the development of all the ordinary functional diseases which impair general efficiency.

Some far-reaching claim, indeed, that of the voice culturist from Australia, but of course it is the same sort of claim as one meets with from every one of these healers all down the centuries. They can always "cure" everything. They have discovered a mysterious secret hitherto hidden from mankind which simply wipes out the ills that flesh is heir to. It does not matter what they come from, apply the remedy and straightway all is well. Their "cure" must of course be applied the right way, usually under their own direction and only after the question of due consideration for their labor in the matter is definitely settled. But once this important preliminary has been arranged, all the patient has got to do, as a rule, is follow a few simple directions and be "cured."

Lest it should be thought that perhaps I am exag-

generating the claims made by Alexander, for he has a great many people of culture and education, some of them professors who are looked upon as deep-thinking men, among his followers, let me quote his own words farther. Otherwise it might seem impossible that he could talk such nonsense as this and have so many learned devotees accept it. Alexander does not hesitate to say, in his books that all diseases are produced by failure to follow his method and they can all be "cured" by taking it up. For those who may have any doubts about it, here is his next claim in which he mentions specifically some of the most serious diseases which continue to afflict humanity simply because his great secret is not yet known among men. But it is only a question of a little time now until they will be no more. We may bid them good-by.

"My next claim is that all such diseases as those referred to above (for example, cancer, appendicitis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, etc.) [matter in parentheses is all his, the Lord only knows what is included under the etc., Bright's, brain and heart disease, I suppose] are too often permitted to remain uneradicated and frequently undetected, and so to develop in consequence of the failure to recognize that the real cause of the development of such diseases is to be found in the erroneous preconceived ideas of the persons immediately concerned, ideas which affect the organism in the manner described in Part I of this book."

Erroneous preconceived ideas he proclaims to be the cause of cancer, appendicitis, and consumption. The trouble is all error of breathing. For Alexander that is the source of all disease just as subluxation of the spine is for Dr. Still, late of Kansas.

After this it would seem impossible that any such claimant for healing powers could possibly secure a following among intelligent, educated people. Any one who thinks that forgets entirely the potent influence of "cures" in bringing conviction to mankind. Just let any one "cure" a lot of people, above all "cure" a professor himself or some of his immediate friends, of some affection from which he suffers probably because of his over attention to his books and his neglect of exercise and of outdoor air and diversion of mind, and then no absurdity is too great to be swallowed. Alexander talks and talks and talks about evolution in the same vague way as Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of Poughkeepsie, who had read "Vestiges of Creation" and founded his philosophy of life and health on that. Of course Andrew Jackson Davis had his followers among the university men of his time and so has F. Matthias Alexander now.

It is wonderful what an immense amount of benefit "conscious control" with breathing exercises, of course, can accomplish for mankind according to Mr. Alexander's book, *Man's Supreme Inheritance*. When asked whether his method of treatment can be applied to the "cure" of bad habits, such as smoking, Mr. Alexander declares:

"In the first place all specific bad habits such as over-indulgence in food, drink, tobacco, etc. [this etc. including, I suppose, drugs of all kinds and perhaps vicious sex habits] evidence a lack of 'control' in a certain direction and the greater number of specific disorders such as asthma, tuberculosis, cancer, nervous complaints, etc., indicate interference with the normal conditions of the body, lack of control and imperfect working of the human mechanism with displacement of different parts



of that mechanism, loss of vitality and its inevitable concomitant, lower activity of functioning in all the vital organs. . . . To regain normal health and power in all such cases, what I have called 'reëducation' is absolutely imperative. This treatment begins in practically all cases, by instructions in the primary factors connected with the eradication of erroneous preconceived ideas connected with bad habits and the simplest correct mental and physical coördination."

In other words, come to me, all ye that have symptoms of any kind, and I will relieve you. The worse they are and the more the doctors have failed to relieve them the surer you can be that this new system, which represents a great new discovery, will "cure" them.

I do not think it would be possible to put more wordy twaddle together with regard to disease and its cause and "cure" than is to be found in these few sentences that I have just quoted. One does not need to be a physician to appreciate that fact, one needs only to know but a little of physiology and pathology and bacteriology in the general notions that are imparted in most well regulated schools. Here is a man, however, appealing to the educated, and manifestly reaching them, who talks about the symptom asthma, which of itself means simply difficulty of breathing, but which represents what is often an extremely disturbing condition that is sometimes due to serious heart disease when approaching its fatal termination, sometimes to the kidneys when their duty of elimination is seriously failing, sometimes merely to the nerves, but sometimes to profound disturbance of metabolism and sometimes to the severest of intoxicant idiosyncrasies; and considers, apparently, that any or all of them may be due to a lack of proper training in breathing and "conscious control"



of muscles. Then he deliberately suggests, so as to widen the appeal and reach more patients, that a few such other affections as tuberculosis, cancer, the alcohol habit, as well as the drug habits, I suppose, are all to be "cured" in the same way by teaching "conscious control" plus breathing exercises.

It is pitiable to think what patients who have suffered for years and are now approaching, perhaps, the fatal terminations of their various diseases will feel when the news of this great new development reaches them. All they needed was to get rid of "erroneous preconceived ideas" under a breathing specialist and then their diseases would have dropped from them. It mattered not how serious their diseases were. They might even be cancer, tuberculosis, or asthma, or pernicious anemia, and this new method would infallibly eradicate them. The "cure" is brought about "by controlled use of the muscular mechanism. In this process the blood is purified, the circulation is gradually improved, and all the injurious accumulations are removed by the internal massage which is part and parcel of the increased vital activity from such reëducation." We have the absolute assurance of this because a distinguished university professor told us about it all in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* called "The Philosopher's Stone." The title was not a joke, but to be taken quite seriously. Here at last was the elixir of life. As the professor said, "I am not telling my plain tale because I happen to have been redeemed in body and soul through Mr. Alexander's method or because I have known others to have been so redeemed."

Even more interesting for the modern physician than the "cures" of this new healer is his method of diagnosis.

After all we have had "cures" worked by everything from mummy and the moss from a hanged man's skull to whisky tonics and Schlatter's handkerchiefs so that we are, to use the English expression, "bally well fed up on cures." To tell a physician who knows the history of medicine even a little, that some new remedy or method of treatment "cures" disease is enough to make him suspect at once that its effect may be on the mind, not the body. Any quack can "cure" disease, but what the physician wants to know is what was the matter with the patient. Diagnosis is the department of medicine that has developed scientifically in recent years to such an extent as to bring us measurably near that consummation so devoutly to be wished that the practice of medicine shall be a science rather than an art.

Mr. Alexander's diagnosis was outlined for the readers of the *Atlantic Monthly*<sup>2</sup> by a distinguished American university professor as follows: "He does not have to undress you or ask you what is the matter with you, or establish your anamnesis" [may I say for the benefit of those not familiar with medical terms that "establish your anamnesis" means in simpler English "take your history"]]. No, all that is necessary is just to take a look at you. "Your obviously faulty posture and movements immediately strike his keen experienced eye." Manifestly his eye is much more penetrating than the x-rays or anything like that and so Mr. Alexander sees right through you, knows exactly what is the matter with you without asking a question, and then of course proceeds to "cure" you. He sees the beginnings of "cancer, appendicitis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, etc." especially etc., and prevents their development. How

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<sup>2</sup> April, 1918, "The Philosopher's Stone," by James Harvey Robinson.

redolent the whole thing is of healers of all kinds all down the centuries. It is not surprising under the circumstances that the Australian Seer's directions confer wonderful powers of penetration upon his patients. The writer in the *Atlantic* tells us: "One of the first results of Mr. A's instruction is the conviction that physically we are fools in spite of gymnasium practice and books on physical culture." It is too bad that another of the results of Mr. Alexander's instructions is not the conviction that mentally we are fools whenever our own health is in question, no matter how much we think we know.

The Australian's great work, however, is accomplished on the body, not the mind, and the result of his system is, as might be expected from the fact that cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, anemia, appendicitis, etc., are done away with, a new creation of the body. As has been told us by high authority, "Mr. Alexander does not simply exhort one to exert conscious control; he actually remodels the body as a sculptor models the clay, gives one a fresh and discriminating muscular sense which not only does away with distortions and expensive strains, but reacts upon one's habitual moods and intellectual operations." It is too bad it does not affect these latter more profoundly so as to enable one to see the gibberish one is accepting as common sense.

Only one thing needs to be added here for the benefit of those who think that education will serve to preserve mankind from healers and "cures" of all sorts. The "Introductory Word" to this work in which appendicitis, cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, etc., particularly, etc., are "cured" by means of breathing exercises and "conscious control" of muscles, was written by one of the best

educated men in the country who is the head of the department of philosophy of one of our most important universities. He confesses that "as a layman I am incompetent to pass judgment upon the particular technic through which he [Mr. Alexander] would bring about a control of intelligence over the bodily organism so as not merely to cure, but to prevent, the present multitudinous maladies of adjustment." But he is perfectly sure that "he [Mr. Alexander] does not stop with the pious recommendation of such conscious control; he possesses and offers a definite method for its realization, and even a layman can testify, as I am glad to do, to the efficacy of its working in concrete cases."

What a dear old maxim the Latins had in that precious aphorism *sutor ne ultra crepidam*. That maxim never applies more than when humanity is "cured" of anything. Every man who is "cured," however, has always felt at all times that he has had exemplified in him some wonderful new discovery and the number of the "cures" that fail goes right on multiplying. Education, instead of lessening them, will probably increase them.

The only thing we can do is to laugh quietly at human nature, for we are all in it and there is no way of getting out of it. Augustine Birrell at the end of his essay on Carlyle has a passage that one would like to paraphrase a little bit. "Fellow mortals! Lend me your ears and let me whisper into their furry depths, 'Don't let us quarrel with human nature, we are part and parcel of it ourselves and we share the defects and qualities of the race just like every one else. In matters of health and its preservation and disease and its cure we can only pray that we shall not let our feelings run away with us'."

## CHAPTER XVI

### CONCLUSION

ONE thing I hope is quite clear as we reach the end of this book. It is that anything, absolutely anything, that presents a possible hook on which to hang a hope will "cure" people of ills of all sorts that may have been making them very miserable for a long while. All that the "cure" needs to do in order to make them well is to change their attitude of mind toward their condition. It does not matter at all if the "cure" has no physical effect, or but the slightest. It even may be detrimental to some degree, but it will cure sufferers who have been complaining for years if they only once become persuaded that it will. They may have had pains and aches, they may have walked lame for years, they may have been unable to raise their hands to their heads, they may have been "paralyzed," utterly unable to walk, or palsied, walking and moving with difficulty, the "cures" will *cure* them. The "cure" may be utterly trivial in itself. It may be positively absurd; that makes no difference. Just let it promise alluringly to *cure* to the point of conviction and then we witness another series of incidents in the history of humanity by which poor victims of dis-ease are made to enjoy life once more and are so glad to have been able to drop their ills that they want every one else whom they know, who is suffering in any way like themselves, or indeed in any other way, to take advantage of the remedy or mode



of treatment which has benefited them. They become ardent apostles of the new cure dispensation.

The "cure" may have come from any one of a hundred different sources; plant, animal, human, divine, terrestrial, subterranean or celestial. What is necessary is that the patients accept it wholeheartedly and unquestioningly. If they do, it always accomplishes its work. It may be that they believe that some one has a mission from on High to cure them and then whether the time be the seventeenth or the twentieth century, or the tenth or the sixth before Christ or under the first dynasty in old Egypt, they get "cured." It may only be that they are brought to believe that some one has fetched from a distance—for the hills are always green far away and the far-fetched counts in this matter—a marvelous curative substance, like the sympathetic powder, which will lessen their pain and heal their wounds without being applied to them at all. If they believe the wonder of healing will be accomplished.

And so it goes. They may be suffering from pains and aches due to old injuries or gunshot wounds—called by their physicians rheumatism or neuritis, according to the medical fashion of the moment—worse in rainy weather, and a source of discomfort that makes life miserable. A few séances in mild blue light, once they have been brought to understand that the actinic rays of the sun, the curative rays are in the blue of the spectrum, and they will announce themselves as bettered. At another time it may be an electrical machine as petty in size and potential as a toy; or it may be a little Leyden jar that is a joke in comparison with the huge batteries of Leyden jars that were afterwards made; but if the patients believe in its efficacy then it



will be effective for "cure." It may be only a pretended mode of electricity, like Perkins' tractors or like Mesmer's *baquet* or tub battery, but it will cure under appropriate circumstances, provided the patients' minds become concentrated on its curative power. It is the circumstances, and above all the mental effect that goes with the power of suggestion that counts and not at all the remedial measure itself. After a while the remedial measure will be found to be utterly ineffective, but that will not undo the "cures" that have been made by it.

Down the list we might proceed finding one "cure" more absurd than another and yet all of them in their turns producing therapeutic effects which very often physicians have been quite unable to secure with a whole pharmacopeia at their command. The "cure" may be due to a little poor whisky with a medicinally bitter taste administered under impressive conditions, but it may be nothing more than the printer's ink taken in connection with a bottle of pseudo-sarsaparilla containing nothing more than a decoction of some harmless inert roots of one kind or another. It may be the touch of a hangman's rope or a bit of mummy from old Egypt with all the fillip for the imagination which these have, though it was said that any piece of rope proclaimed as the hangman's rope or any bit of flesh treated with asphaltum until it had the appearance of mummy, proved just as curative. Tractors made of wood colored to imitate metal were demonstrated to be just as effective as Perkins' patented articles. It was the idea of what they were, not the reality which "cured."

On the other hand, there need be nothing physical at all in connection with the "cure" and yet hundreds and even thousands of persons will announce their recovery

from serious diseases, or what they were sure were serious diseases by its application. P. P. Quimby started a great new chapter in the history of "cures" of various kinds when he announced that he knew from his own experience with the sick that their troubles were the effect of their own beliefs. He simply talked people into being well by the proclamation in ever repeated phrases of his principle "every disease is the invention of man and has no identity in wisdom." With that as the principal and fundamental element of his healing mission he "cured" literally thousands of people who had despaired of ever being well again. As his biographers say of him: "When finally booked for the grave they would send for or go to Quimby or, as he expressed it himself, they would send for him and the undertaker at the same time and the one who got there first would get the case." This sentence would seem to show that he had a sense of humor in spite of the fact that he proclaimed that all he had to do to "cure" the ills of mankind was "to prove to the patient that his state of suffering was an error of mind and not what he thought it was."

It is the *idea* that "cures" the patients, though this may be attached to anything physical or mental to give it an air of novelty or make it properly impressive. Quimby is the acknowledged father of New Thought on the one hand and the presumptive father of Christian Science on the other and both of these continue to have any number of "cures" to their credit and not all among the ignorant or the poor or the benighted or those who have to grasp at any straw of hope, but on the contrary among the educated, the descendants of the old families, and the well-to-do who can afford to get the very best advice there is. The reason they are devotees is because

either they or their friends have been "cured" by the system.

Quimby had a whole host of predecessors in his work who accomplished just as many and as wonderful "cures" as he did with some other idea. Andrew Jackson Davis, the Seer of Poughkeepsie, after his graveyard experience with Galen, the great physician of antiquity, "cured" anything and everything off hand. But so did the Leatherstocking God in Ohio of whom Judge Taneyhill has given us the history and William Dean Howells has given us the humanized story. The "cure" by means of an idea, however, need not necessarily be attached to religion. It proves just as effective if it is some mode of pseudo-science provided it can be made to carry conviction with it. Hypnotism worked marvelous "cures" so long as it was thought to be a great new phase of modern psychology. Now that we know that it is only induced hysteria, it does not "cure" anything any more. Psychoanalysis continues to work "cures," though the psychologists laugh at its scientific claims and will continue to do so as long as the popular persuasion as to its scientific quality and, above all, novelty remains. After a while interest in it will wane as in hypnotism, and psychoanalysis, like metaphysical healing and animal magnetism, will be gently laid away in the garret of disused "cures" beside so many other remedies and modes of treatment.

Of course an idea or a change in the attitude of the mind of the patient will not "cure" cancer and a hundred thousand people died of cancer last year, and another hundred thousand are dying this year and still another hundred thousand will die next year in spite of all the claims of all the healers to "cure" everything. Neither

will an idea "cure" cirrhosis of the liver, nor arteriosclerosis nor valvular heart affections nor Bright's disease. These still continue to make their ravages and so does pneumonia and tuberculosis and the microbic diseases generally. The "cures" that fail do not remove tumors, nor replace amputated limbs, nor set a fracture, nor make a sprain whole, but they will do a great deal to relieve many symptoms connected with these affections which are due to dreads and anxieties and solicitude which often prove more disturbing to patients than the underlying condition itself. Something more than fifty per cent very probably of the complaints of mankind are due much more to their mental anxiety with regard to various physical affections which they have than to the physical ailments themselves. An idea of any kind accepted seriously will "cure" the mental state and therefore it is easy to understand why all sorts of treatments are accepted as marvelously curative, even of real physical ills.

These "cures" have worked successfully at all times in the history of humanity. We recognize their efficiency in the stories that are told us of experiences in the old temple hospitals in Egypt and we recognize their remedial power in the old Greek health resorts as well as in Rome, at the time of Galen and earlier. They continued to "cure" people of all sorts of ills during the Middle Ages, but they proved quite as effective during that period of intellectual illumination, the Renaissance, when men were confident that they knew ever so much more than before, as during the darkest of the so-called Dark Ages. New chapters in the history of the "cures" that have failed were written in each century of modern times. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are

full of "cures" that we would laugh at, and rightly, at the present time. But the nineteenth century does not lag behind in climbing the bad eminence of therapeutic absurdities, while the twentieth century not only does not show the slightest tendency to overcome the proneness of mankind to be "cured" by anything and everything that produces a definite effect on the mind and changes the patient's attitude toward himself and his ills, but on the contrary affords an ample field for the various new cults of healing. Indeed, if anything, these curious "cures" have become more effective and are now capable of healing more people than ever before. News travels so fast and is so widely disseminated that where hundreds used to learn of cures by word of mouth, thousands and even millions of them now learn about them from the newspapers and the magazines and other avenues of publicity and to learn of them is surely to have them produce their good effect on *some* people. The diffusion of information and the spread of education, as it is called, have made people more suggestible and not more critical, or perhaps have made ever so many more people feel that they can judge for themselves and do not have to turn to any authority to guide them, so they listen to the "patter" of the latest healer or drink in the literature of the latest mode of "cure" and then it is not long before they too are counted among those who have been healed.

The "cures" have worked, as we have said so often in this book, on all sorts of people, educated and uneducated, supposedly intelligent and confessedly lacking in intelligence, on the rich and the poor, on the lifters and the leaners among mankind. Even a little investigation makes it very clear that these "cures" are



more effective when applied to those who have had the advantage of some development of their minds. After all, these are the ones who can most readily take in the theory on which the "cure" is founded so as to produce a definitely curative effect upon themselves. It is rather easy to understand that if you are to be "cured" of a long standing disease through your mind you have got to have some mind to work the "cure." Little children cannot be "cured" by such means. Half-witted people are not affected by them. Imbeciles and idiots, they are not even tried on. On the other hand it is surprising to note how often school teachers, yes, even college professors, clergymen, of course—because they have the habit of belief; lawyers not infrequently—in spite of the presumed judicial quality of their mind; the "high-brows," that is, those who have more education than they have intelligence, almost as a rule, are favorably affected by each of these new-fangled "cures."

There is no use in saying that these people were not "cured" or that they did not have anything the matter with them to begin with. After all, each man or woman has a right to judge of his or her own sensations and they know that whereas they were ill, now they are well. There is still less use in saying that they were suffering from imaginary ills. The more definite experience one has with these patients, and especially the more opportunity one has to make a careful investigation of their conditions, the more is the realization that they all have something the matter with them—something definitely physical—often it is true, quite insignificant in itself, but which for one reason or another they are exaggerating into a serious ailment. No physician who has seen many of these patients is



likely to talk of imaginary ills. Their condition may be a psychoneurosis, that is, their mind may be disturbing their nervous system for the production of their more serious symptoms, but there is, almost as a rule, some physical factor that is setting up the mental state which disturbs the nervous system. This disturbance may prove serious enough to prevent the patients from walking properly, not infrequently it is the source of pains and aches which make them very miserable, or of discomfort very much worse in rainy weather which makes life a torment to them because of their dread that it will get worse and eventually cripple them. It is such conditions as these particularly that are cured by the "cures that fail."

It is true that most of these people are suffering rather from "complaints" than from definite pathological conditions, but they are quite as much in need of the ministrations of a physician, or of some one who will help them to raise themselves out of the state in which they are, as are any of the sufferers from any organic disease. These patients will not get better of themselves. They must be *cured*. Their mental state will not allow nature to go on with her ordinary curative reaction so as to restore them to health, but on the contrary they put brakes on their resistive vitality and maintain their disease. Uncle Henry, writing in *Collier's*, when the cigar stand men asked him if he had been "enjoying good health" replied: "Where on earth did you get the wild idea that any one ever enjoyed good health? Nobody does. Why bless your soul, Barney, ailments are the keystone in America's arch of happiness. And interior decoratin' with medicines of various kinds is the national game. Friends die, fame

fades and success palls, but when you put your imagination to work on a good satisfactory ailment you have got something that is able to stand the acid test of time."

The people who have enjoyed poor health for a time until they are tired of it and want a change, find healers and remedies and modes of treatment which "cure" them often after they have made the rounds of regular physicians. Why should they not then in their joy and with the relief afforded want to proclaim their "cure" from the housetop in the unselfish desire to share with others, the happiness that has come through the relief afforded them? There is of course for all of them, besides, that other motive so compelling that their "cure" really gives added prestige to the new remedy and makes them a sort of pilot in the waste waters of disease, a light house to guide others to "cure." They have or feel they have a share in the discovery of the remedy, but their sincerity cannot be impugned nor their sanity suspected nor their well-meaningness misunderstood.

In our own time, that is during this third decade of the twentieth century which has begun so auspiciously—as far as cures are concerned—with the monkey glands, we have a whole host of "cures" around us bidding for their place in the lumber room of disused remedies. We know so little about glands in general that it is very probable that most of what we think we know is not so. They certainly have all the appearance of being classed mainly in the course of another ten years among the "cures" that have failed. The last decade saw the rise and the fall of the vaccines and this one is seeing the wonderful "cures" that are worked by the pulling of teeth, though already there is more than a suspicion that a good many of the teeth of young

folks are being pulled rather as a tribute to pretended knowledge than to any real scientific reasons. We are just going through the vitamine period when everything is vitamines and when of course there is a germ of truth, but a whole forest of delusion at work. We are hearing much about focal infections and the surgeons are going to prolong life by cutting out various portions of the intestinal tract and make existence ever so much more comfortable than it has been. Those of us who went through the epidemic of what was called ovariectomy at the end of the nineteenth century, when any woman was likely to be unsexed for almost anything that she had the matter with her, and when marvelous "cures" of everything from organic epilepsy to hysteria, and from unbearable pain to the discomfort of a floating kidney were reported as relieved by the operation, are not likely to be carried away by the surgical enthusiasm of the moment.

It is easy to see, however, that we have a crop of "cures" that will probably fail all ready for the reaper who comes to gather them into his barns and store them away. I think that we have more candidates for places in this very interesting chapter of medical history than they have ever had in the past.

This book has been written not with the hope that we would prevent them from developing, for given human nature as it is that seems out of the question, but so that we shall at least not take ourselves too seriously. This is the funniest chapter, I think, in the history of medicine. But so far it has only been funny for the succeeding generations who found out that the vaunted "cures" were no good. Why should not the present generation itself share some of the fun? We can see

the "cures," that have all the look of being about to be failures, that resemble the "cures" that have failed so closely as to be almost unmistakable; why not have our laugh over them now? Of late years we have come to cultivate the jokes in medicine more than ever before; why not take them from this source also?

## APPENDIX

### GALEN AND THE HEALER WHO WAS A WEAVER

**T**HE healer, like the poor, we have always had with us. Hippocrates complains of his impositions upon the ailing in his time. Here is the tale of Galen's experience with one of them in the second century at Rome. The sketch of the weaver who became a leech reads like a story by O. Henry, even to the unexpected ending, though one might doubt whether the weaver would not be tempted to go back to the nice easy way of making a living for which apparently he was so well gifted by nature and which he had tried once so successfully. Of course he made "cures." They all do. What did it matter that he gave remedies "contrary to the ailment"—that is, that in the opinion of the greatest physician of his time would do harm rather than good. The impression he had produced by his successful pretense of knowledge produced so good an effect as to surprise even Galen. The man knew physiognomy and was quite sure to be successful for he "claimed cleverness" and "praised himself and his skill" and promised glibly to "cure" and that is all that is necessary for a great many complaints.

Some people think that quackery is modern, or at least fostered by popular education, and that unscrupulous struggle for success which is sometimes considered a characteristic of our time. I have been rather interested, however, in tracing out a series of chapters in the history of quackery which show that the methods, the ways, the motives and the character of the quack have been about the same from time immemorial, in all countries of the world. We might think, for instance, that the quack of the occident would be quite different from

the quack of the orient ; but such evidence—among other things, a little story in the Arabian Nights—shows how many of the characteristics of the quack with which we are familiar at the present time may be traced to the farthest limits of space and time.

The Arabian Nights themselves—that is, the series of stories which we know by that name—were given a definite collective form (probably by a single writer) at some time during the fifteenth century. However that may be, the individual tales are undoubtedly many of them very old, some of them of unknown antiquity and derived from widely scattered sources. Variants are found in the folklore of Egypt, Syria, the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, Persia, India and even distant China and the remote center of Africa. One of them, the story of the clever thief, was retold by Herodotus nearly 500 years before Christ ; and he knew that it was old in his time. It may be that some of these stories represent the oldest tales that mankind has, and that many of them come from that central plateau of Asia where very probably the human race originated. It is all the more interesting then to find among them the following characteristic story of a quack with all the traits that we know so well to-day :

“Once upon a time there was a man in Persia who wedded a woman of rank higher than himself and nobler of lineage, who had no guardian to preserve her from want. She was very loath to marry one who was beneath her ; yet she wed him because of need, and took of him a bond in writing to the effect that he would ever be under her order to bid and forbid and would never thwart her in word or in deed. Now the man was a weaver and he bound himself in writing to pay his wife ten thousand dirhams in case of default. After such fashion they abode a long while till one day the wife went out to fetch water and saw a leech who had spread a carpet hard by the road, whereon he had set up great store of simples and implements of medicine and he was speaking and muttering charms, while the folk flocked to him from all quarters and girt him about on every side.



"The weaver's wife marveled at the largeness of the physician's fortune and said to herself, 'Were my husband such a one he would lead an easy life and that wherein we are of straitness and poverty would be widened to him.'

"When she went home she said to her husband, 'Verily my breast is narrowed by reason of thee and of the very goodness of thine intent; narrow means suit me not, and thou in thy present craft gainest naught; so either do thou seek out a business other than this or pay me my rightful due and let me wend my ways.'

"Her husband chid her for this and advised her to take patience; but she would not be turned from her design and said to him, 'Go forth and watch yonder physician how he doth and learn from him what he saith.' Said he, 'Let not thy heart be troubled; I will go every day to the session of the leech.'

"So he began resorting daily to the physician and committing to memory his answers and his jargon.

"Then he returned to his wife and said to her, 'I have stored up the physician's sayings in memory and have mastered his manner of muttering and diagnoses and prescribing remedies, and I wot by heart the names of the medicines and of all the diseases, and there abideth of thy bidding naught undone; so what dost thou command me now to do?'

"Quoth she, 'Leave the loom and open thyself a leech's shop.'

"'But,' quoth he, 'my fellow-townsmen know me and this affair will not profit me, save in a land of strangerhood; so come, let us go out from this city and get us to a foreign land and there live.'

"Accordingly he wrought himself a carpet and then, taking his weaving gear he sold it and bought with the price drugs and simples with which they set out and journeyed to a village, where they took up their abode. Here the man fell to going round about the hamlets and villages and outskirts of towns, after donning leech's dress, and he began to make much gain. Their affairs prospered and their circumstances bettered; wherefore they praised Allah for their present ease. In this way they lived and wandered from country to country, sojourning for awhile in one town and another, till they came to the land of the Romans and alighted down in the city thereof wherein was Galen the wise physician; but the weaver knew him not. So he fared forth, as was his wont, in quest of a

place where the folk might be gathered together and hired the courtyard of Galen himself. There he laid his carpet, and spreading out on it his simples and instruments of medicine, praised himself and his skill and claimed a cleverness such as none but he might claim.

"Galen heard that which he affirmed of his understanding, and it was certified unto him and established in his mind that the man was a skilled leech of the leeches of the Persians, and he said in himself, 'Unless he had confidence in his knowledge and were minded to confront me and contend with me, he had not sought the very door of my house, neither had he spoken that which he hath spoken.'

"And care and doubt got hold on Galen; so he drew near the weaver and addressed himself to see how his doing should end, while the folk began to flock to him and describe to him their ailments, and he would answer them thereof, hitting the mark one while and missing it another while, so naught appeared to Galen of his fashion whereby his mind might be assured that he had justly estimated his skill.

"Presently up came a woman, and when the weaver saw her afar off he said to her, 'Is not your husband a Jew and is not his ailment flatulence?' 'Yes,' replied the woman, and the folk marveled at this; wherefore the man was magnified in the eyes of Galen, for that he heard speech such as was not of usage of doctors.

"Then the woman asked, 'What is the remedy?' and the weaver answered, 'Bring the honorarium.'

"So she paid him a dirham and he gave her medicines contrary to that ailment and such as would only aggravate the complaint. When Galen saw what appeared to him proof of the man's incapacity he turned to his disciples and pupils and bade them fetch the mock doctor, with all his gear and rugs; and accordingly they brought him without stay or delay. When Galen saw the weaver he asked, 'What drove thee to do that which thou dost?'

"So the weaver acquainted the wise Galen with his adventure, especially with the marriage settlement, and the obligation by which he was bound with regard to his wife, whereat the sage marveled.

"Then he entreated the weaver with kindness and took him apart and said to him, 'Expound to me whence thou knewest

that the woman was from a man, and he a stranger and Jew, and that his ailment was flatulence?"

"The weaver replied, 'Tis well. Thou must know that we people of Persia are skilled in physiognomy, and I saw the woman to be rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed and tall-statured. These qualities belong not to the woman of Rome; moreover, I saw her burning with anxiety, so I knew that the patient was her husband. As for her strangerhood, I noted that the dress of the woman differed from that of the townsfolk, wherefore I knew that she was a foreigner; and in her hand I saw a yellow rag, which garred me wot that the sick man was a Jew and she a Jewess. Moreover, she came to me on First Day; and 'tis the Jew's custom to take meat puddings and food that hath passed the night and eat them on the Saturday, their Sabbath, hot and cold, and they exceed in eating; wherefore flatulence and indigestion betide them. Thus I was directed and guessed that which thou hast heard.'

"Now when Galen heard this he ordered that the weaver be given the amount of his wife's dowry and bade pay it to her and said to him, 'Divorce her.'

"Furthermore, he forbade him from returning to the practice of physic and warned him never again to take to wife a woman of rank higher than his own; and he gave him his spending money and charged him to return to his proper craft."

The story is a lesson for all time. We have here, as I have said, the eternal underlying factor in the success of the quack, his readiness to promise absolutely to "cure" anything and everything. His apparent self-confidence is so unbounded that even the genuinely skilled physician begins to wonder whether the quack has not some secrets not possessed by the profession. When the physician gets a little closer to the quack, however, he finds that the main elements in the latter's success, besides his confidence-inspiring boasts, are his knowledge of human nature and skill in playing on foibles and credulity. As a rule the medicines he gives, like those of the weaver-leech, are such as do harm rather than good, but yet is the quack in honor and the money he makes is far beyond the amount earned by the regular physician. The real motive for the leech's change of

occupation is similar to that of the quack to-day, that he may have a more dignified occupation, make more money and live up to his wife's idea of social station. Galen's method of managing the quack is that which we have found necessary in modern times. We have had to investigate the methods of the quacks and their supposed new discoveries and then we have had to arrange that they should no longer be allowed to exploit the public.

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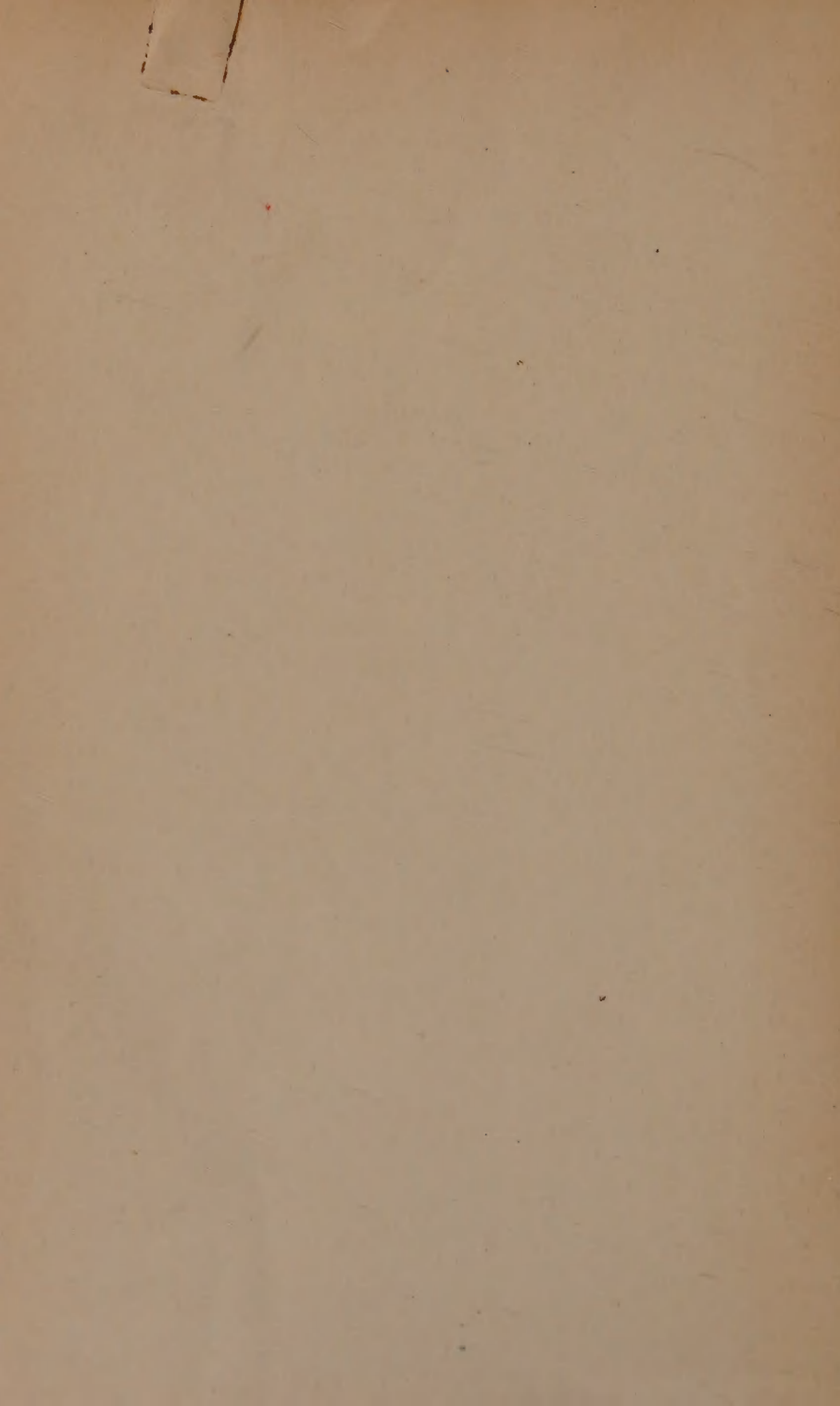
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